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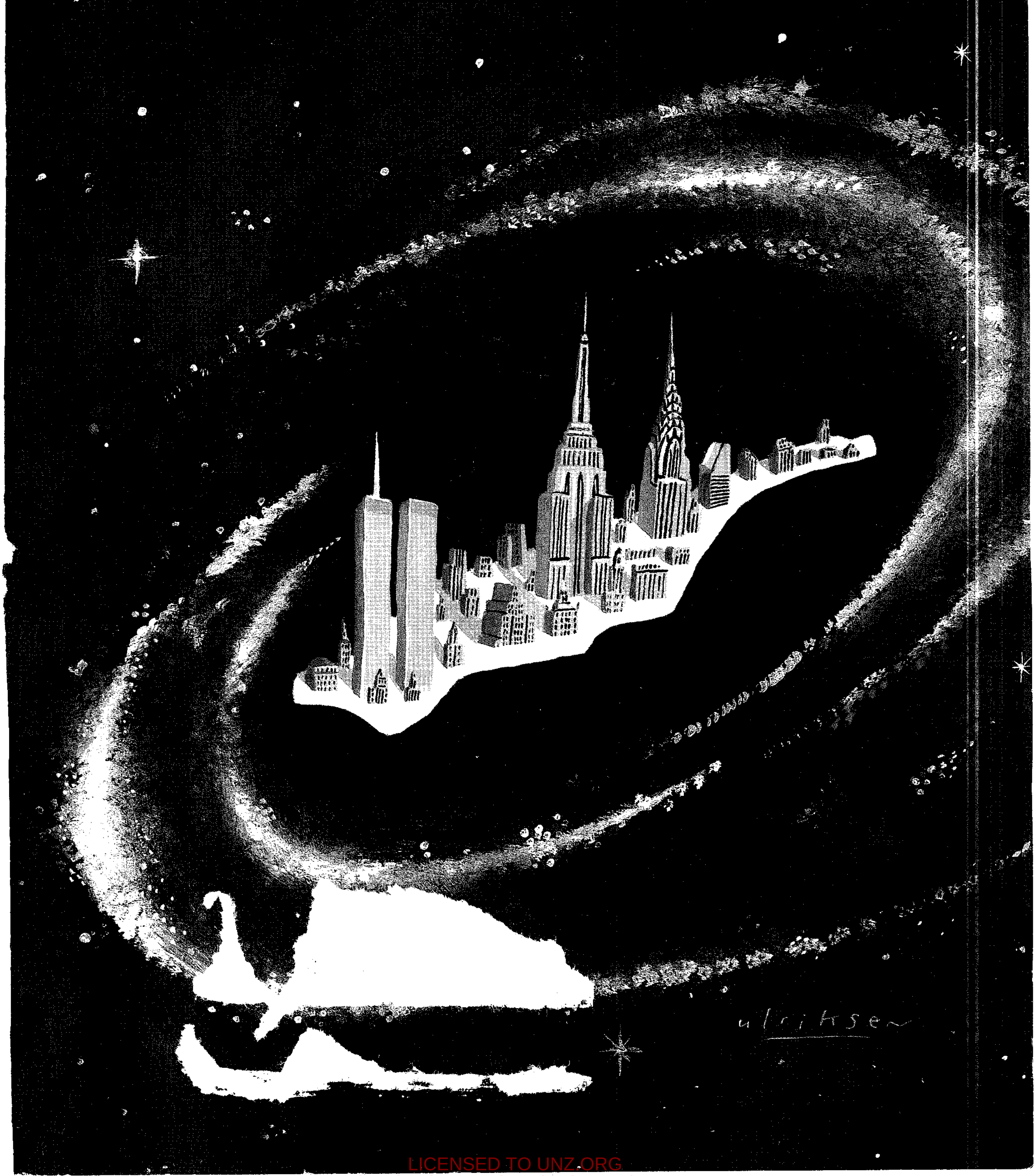

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JANUARY 10, 2000

THE MAIL 5

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 6

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 25
Comment Adam Gopnik on time's big slowdown.
Et cetera Restaurant-reservation revenge; Biker Billy, celebrity gardener.

DEPARTMENTS
Our Far-Flung Correspondents Fallout . . . . *Bobbie Ann Mason* 30
A small town in Kentucky uncovers a nuclear catastrophe.

Shouts & Murmurs The Media Beat Goes On . . . . *Roy Blount, Jr.* 38

Annals of Crime A Devil in the Hills . . . . *John Montague* 40
A bizarre murder in Ireland worries the new Europe.

A REPORTER AT LARGE Gandhi's Daughters . . . . *Mary Anne Weaver* 50
Can a new generation undo centuries of sexual oppression?

SHOWCASE Renée Fleming . . . . *Firooz Zahedi, Charles Michener* 56

PROFILE The Poet of Pulp. . . . . *Pete Hamill* 62
How Ed McBain invented the cop-squad drama.

SKETCHBOOK God's Drawing Board . . . . *Ralph Steadman* 68

FICTION "The Glass House". . . . . *Chris Adrian* 72

THE CRITICS
Books The myths of early childhood . . . . *Malcolm Gladwell* 80
Briefly Noted 86
Musical Events "The Great Gatsby" . . . . *Alex Ross* 88
The Current Cinema "Any Given Sunday," "The Hurricane". . . . *David Denby* 90

POEMS
"Wedding the Locksmith's Daughter" . . . . *Robin Robertson* 43
"Desire" . . . . *Eamon Grennan* 78

THE BACK PAGE Folk Art of Midtown . . . . *Roz Chast* 94

COVER *Center of the Universe, by Mark Ulriksen*

DRAWINGS *Lee Lorenz, Danny Shanahan, William Haefeli, Peter Porges, David Sipress, Gahan Wilson, Christopher Weyant, Alex Gregory, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Mick Stevens, Harry Bliss, Michael Crawford, Barbara Smaller, Robert Weber, Leo Cullum, Jack Ziegler, Peter Steiner, Frank Cotham, William Hamilton, Charles Barsotti, Robert Mankoff*

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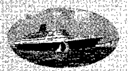

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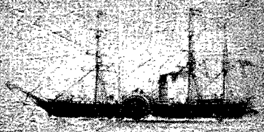

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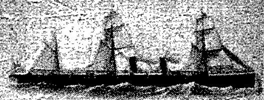

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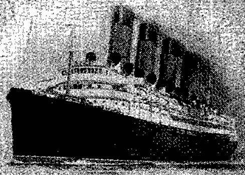

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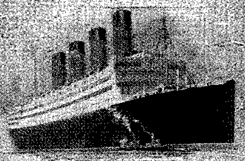

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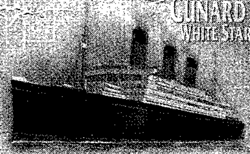

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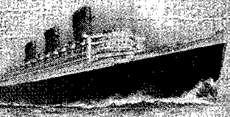

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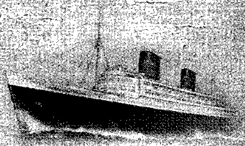

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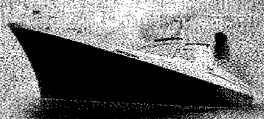

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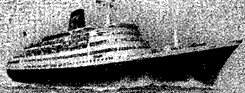

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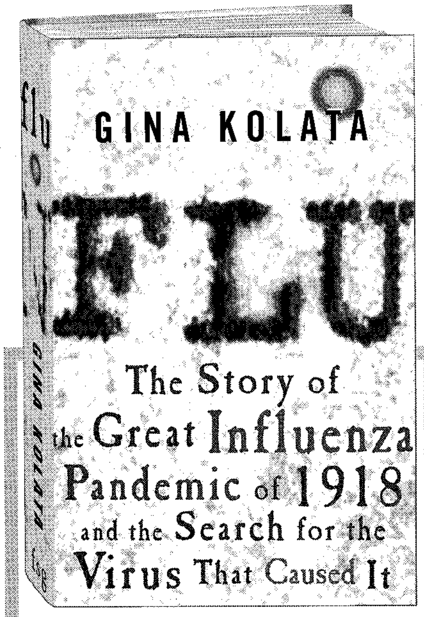
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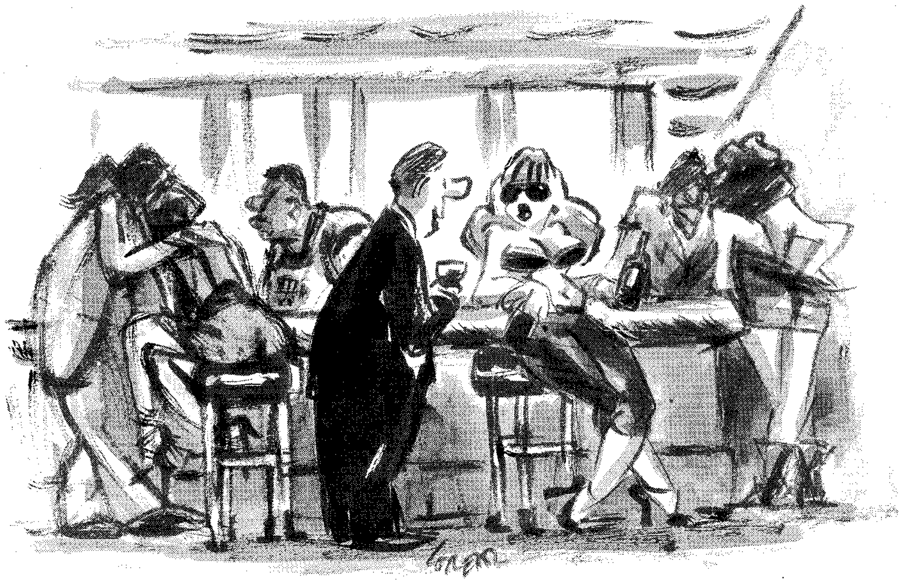

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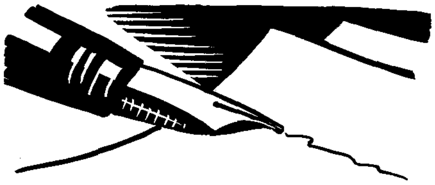

SPECIOUS SPECIES

In "The Accidental Creationist" (December 13th) Robert Wright makes a good point in saying that Stephen Jay Gould plays into creationists' hands by insisting that evolutionary theory is incompatible with religious beliefs. But that is not Gould's only contribution to the creationists' attack on education. Creationists insist that Genesis should be taught instead of evolutionary theory, because the former is (to believers) indubitable, and the latter, being a human scientific construction, is necessarily uncertain. Gould accepts the creationist terms by arguing that evolutionary theory should be taught in school because it is no longer in doubt. He thereby implicitly agrees with the creationists that an argument about what should be taught in school is an argument about what is "the truth." The hallmark of a healthy scientific theory is that it is constantly doubted, challenged, tested, and confirmed. Big-bang cosmology and evolutionary biology belong in school because they are two theories healthy in this regard.

DAVID W. HOGG
Princeton, N.J.

Robert Wright's suggestion that evolutionary biologists should embrace "progressivism" to persuade the "hearts and minds of the uncommitted" that intelligent beings are the destined outcome of God's deliberate shaping of the biosphere lacks academic integrity. Wright prefers an evolutionary theory that softens the blow and provides the "spiritual consolation" most people are after. Whose argument really strengthens the creationists?

WILLIAM Y. WOOD
Taipei, Taiwan

Mr. Wright seems to think that Stephen Jay Gould should abandon his stance on evolution, not simply because he believes it is wrong, but because it doesn't provide any support for people seeking belief in a higher purpose. This has something of the flavor of criticizing Galileo for his support of heliocentric theory because the idea that the earth is not the center of the universe made a lot of people uncomfortable, and for reasons similarly unrelated to science.

MARY A. POWERS
Durango, Colo.

Robert Wright argues that Stephen Jay Gould's anger over the misuses of Darwinian theory to justify wealth and power—social Darwinism—has led Gould to interpret the evolutionary facts to suit his politics. Wright may be correct in his views on Gould and Darwinian theory, but he's wrong to dismiss social Darwinism as a concept that "has been essentially dead for a long time." Many of the bedrock distinctions between liberal and conservative policies today revolve around the question of whether the rich deserve to keep their wealth because they are the winners in nature's great survival test (as social Darwinists believe) or whether those at the top have a social, moral, and political obligation to share their wealth with those less fortunate. Perhaps it's been a while since Darwin's name was piously invoked by Gilded Age robber barons, but if Wright really thinks that social Darwinism died out long ago then he hasn't been reading the newspapers.

CHARLES MCLEAN
Washington, D.C.

How many of these abstruse internecine struggles between evolutionists must we endure? Perhaps the consolation is that, whatever the outcome of the debate between Wright and Gould, the rest of us really can't lose: if the evolutionists win the battle for the minds of young Kansans, then of course we all win; if the creationists come out on top, it proves that Gould is right and evolution can proceed backward as well as forward.

WILLIAM SILVERT
Halifax, N.S.

DON'T FORGET TO VOTE: The ballot for the first annual *New Yorker* Book Awards can be found on page 37.

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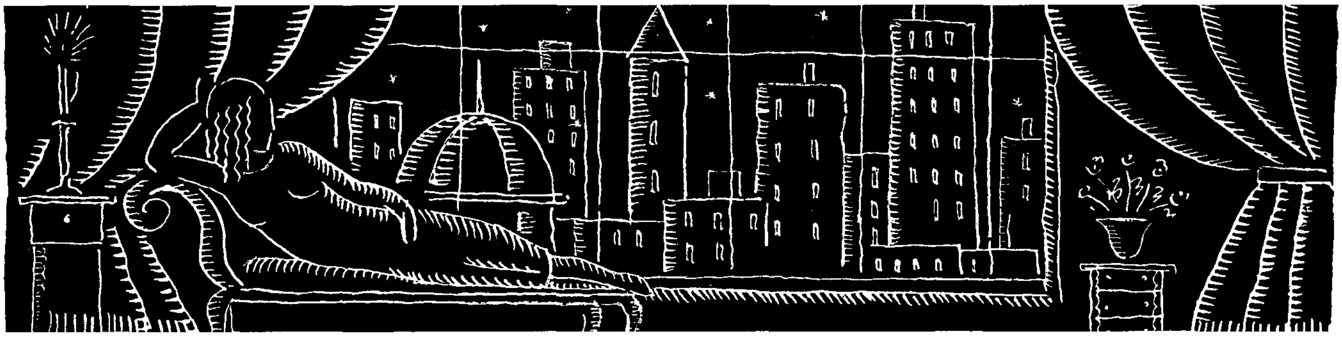

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Aquila Theatre Company—The British and American troupe, in repertory performances of "King Lear" and "The Iliad: Book One." Jan. 5 at 8: "King Lear." . . ¶ Jan. 6-9 at 8: "The Iliad: Book One." (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 279-4200.)

Dirty Blonde—Claudia Shear ("Blown Sideways Through Life") stars in a play she wrote, about two single New Yorkers who happen to meet at the grave of Mae West. In previews. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475.)

Jet Lag—A live-action-and-video production by the Builders Association, based on two true stories, about the perils of modern travel. Opens Jan. 6 at 8 and runs through Jan. 15. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793.)

Lobster Alice—A comedy by Kira Obolensky, set in mid-forties Hollywood, in which the arrival of Salvador Dali (David Patrick Kelly) inspires a creatively blocked animator (Reg Rogers) and his assistant (Jessica Hecht). In previews through Jan. 8. Opens Jan. 9 at 8. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

The Merry Wives of Windsor—The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Shakespeare's comedy. Previews begin Jan. 7. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802.)

Sexual Perversity in Chicago—The Atlantic Theatre Company's all-Mamet season continues with the playwright's 1976 comedy, accompanied by his 1976 one-act "Duck Variations." In previews. (336 W. 20th St. 645-1242.)

Wrong Mountain—A new play by David Hirson ("La Bête"). In previews. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

Adam Baum and the Jew Movie—Ron Leibman stars as a Jewish movie mogul who hires a Gentile (Christopher Evan Welch) to write a film about anti-Semitism, in a comedy by Daniel Goldfarb. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 279-4200. Closes Jan. 9.)

Amadeus—From London, a revival of Peter Shaffer's drama, starring Michael Sheen as Mozart and David Suchet as Salieri. Sir Peter Hall is the director. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Another American: Asking & Telling—A one-man show written and performed by Marc Wolf, based on his interviews with gay and straight military personnel from the Second World War to the present. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

The Bomb-Itty of Errors—A hip-hop adaptation of Shakespeare's "The Comedy of Errors." (45 Bleecker, 45 Bleecker St., at Lafayette St. 307-4100.)

The Countess—Gregory Murphy's play, which tells the story of how the nineteenth-century art critic John Ruskin's wife left him for the painter John Everett Millais, is a vivid exploration of the self-indulgent pleasures of small-mindedness (in this case, Ruskin's and his parents'). The script is funny and intelligent, if a bit overlong, and the cast does a wonderful job of revealing the characters' complete inability to communicate with each other, personally or artistically. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 594-2826.)

Dame Edna: The Royal Tour—Former housewife turned international entertainer Dame Edna Everage (the sublime comic creation of the Australian Dadaist and dandy Barry Humphries) is, to adopt her penchant for alliteration, a virago of vitriol, a harpy of happiness, a megastar of maliciousness. (11/1/99) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Dinner with Friends—Donald Margulies's new play concerns two upper-middle-class couples who have been married for a dozen or so years; one of them survives the wear and tear of marriage, and the other doesn't. It's a perceptive depiction of the mystery and the mundanity of marriage, and the cast give well-rounded performances. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave., at 14th St. 239-6200.)

"Another American: Asking & Telling," written by and starring Marc Wolf.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

Elsa Edgar—A pair of monologues in which the renowned society gossip Elsa Maxwell and C.I.A. director J. Edgar Hoover provide a fascinating look at the way secrets became public currency during the early years of this century, as American culture became increasingly P.R.-addled. The often insightful and funny script was written by Bob Kingdom with Neil Bartlett; Mr. Kingdom also performs—in order—Elsa with heartbreaking lucidity, Edgar too broadly, the conclusion movingly. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes Jan. 16.)

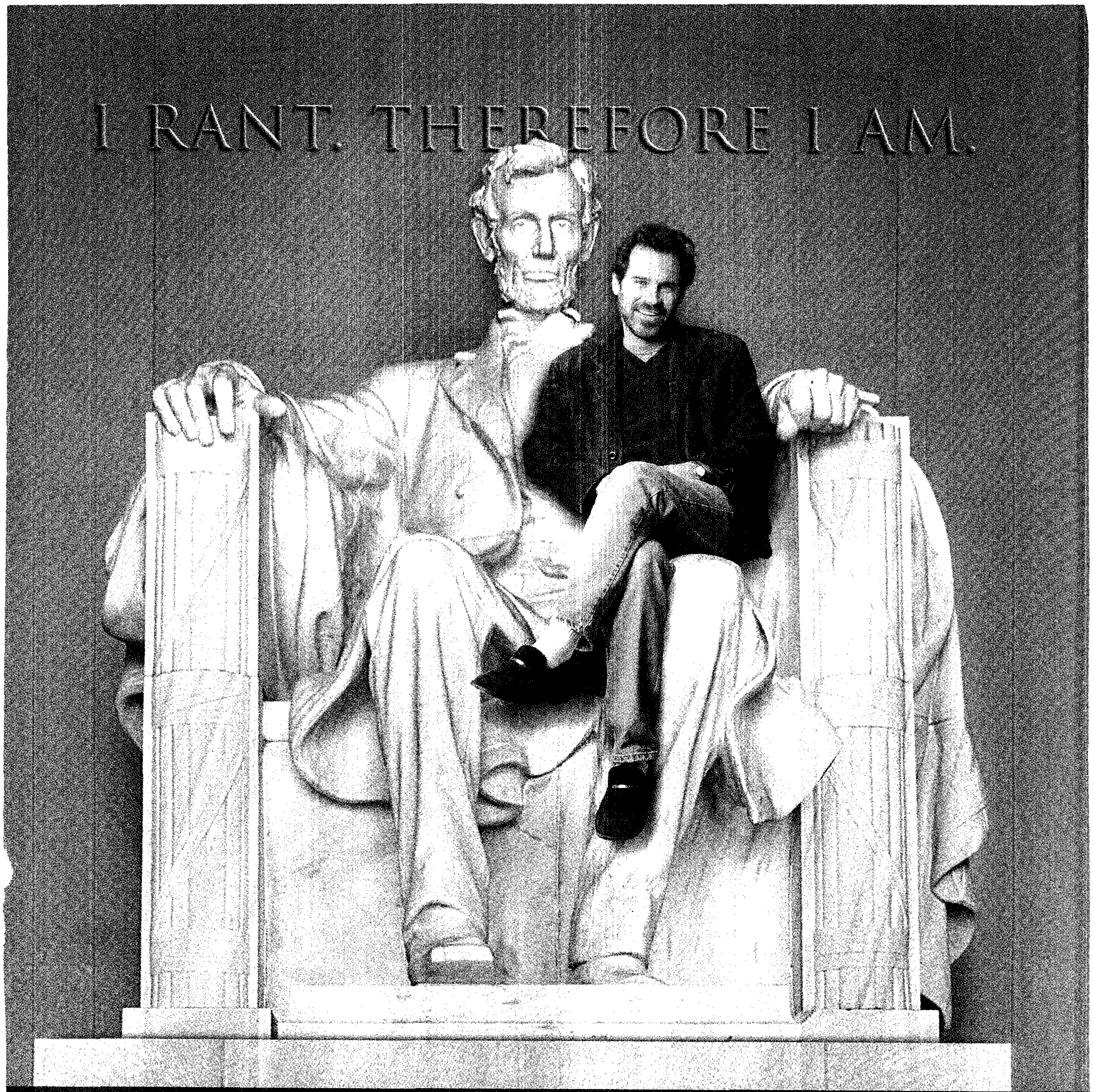
The Exact Center of the Universe—An amiable comedy by Joan Vail Thorne, lightly seasoned with insight, about a classic Southern dragon-lady mother (Frances Sternhagen, in a beautiful performance). (Century Theatre, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

Fully Committed—This hilarious one-man comedy, a tribute to starving actors slaving away in the restaurant "industry" in order to make ends meet, has reopened at a new theatre. Mark Setlock plays a lovable reservations clerk at an unnamed tony Manhattan restaurant, who deals with the daily deluge of calls from dying-to-be-guests. Developed by Setlock and the playwright Becky Mode. (Cherry Lane Theatre, 38 Commerce St. 239-6200.)

Hamlet—Andrei Serban's new production includes many of his signature tics: annoying music, fits of stylized gestures, willfully perverse characterizations (Fortinbras as a Vienna Choirboy?). Yet it's clearer than ever that these tics are the by-products of a deep understanding of the play at hand. And here they don't overwhelm that understanding: Serban and his cast truly bring the play to life, making the audience think it all through themselves. Liev Schreiber's Hamlet is completely convincing (no mean feat in a day when the Prince's every speech has become fodder for high-school recitations), Colm Feore is a brilliant Claudius, and George Morfogen in the clown roles and Christian Camargo as Horatio are just right as the everyday ballast to the tragedy. (425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 9.)

If Memory Serves—Elizabeth Ashley is a fading television actress whose son (Sam Trammell) causes a scandal by making his recollections of his childhood public, in a comedy by Jonathan Tolins. Directed by Leonard Foglia. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

The Irish . . . and How They Got That Way—A brief engagement of a revue by Frank McCourt, author of the best-selling memoir "Angela's Ashes." It's a generally good-natured if somewhat choppy amalgam of historical tidbits, quotations from letters and speeches, and Irish songs from the past two centuries, performed by a versatile and charming cast of six singers and musicians. Deftly directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes Jan. 30.)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Jackie Mason: Much Ado About Everything—The comic is back on Broadway with a new show, in which he explores the problems with Bill Gates, the Internet, Y2K, Bill and Hillary, Rudy Giuliani, and Jesse Ventura, among others. (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

James Joyce's The Dead—Playwrights Horizons' musical version of the short story has moved to Broadway's Belasco Theatre for a limited-run encore engagement. (11/8/99) (111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Keep Bangin'—"Stomp" showed that you can cook up an evening of theatre out of percussion alone, but this show proves it better. The ten-man cast is led by Jared Crawford, who, with his million-toothed smile, firestorm of dreads, and rare genius, lifts the whole thing into a kind of art heaven. (Players Theatre, 115 MacDougal St. 254-5076.)

Kiss Me, Kate—This revival of the Cole Porter musical, a play within a play about the backstage goings on of a production of "The Taming of the Shrew," represents the highest level of theatrical collaboration currently on Broadway. The hero is the veteran British director Michael Blakemore, whose success lies to a large extent in marshalling the talents of his production team. Besides his own vivid stage pictures, he has inspired the costume designer, Martin Pakledinaz, the lighting designer, Peter Kaczorowski, the choreographer, Kathleen Marshall, and the set designer, Robin Wagner, to the theatrical equivalent of a field day. And yet, with all its admirable expertise and its various delights, the production is oddly earthbound: it comes down to the vexing issue of chemistry. The leads, Marin Mazzie and Brian Stokes Mitchell, are expert players, but they are not—in the true meaning of the words—star performers, the kind who bring something larger than life to musical stories. (11/29/99) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

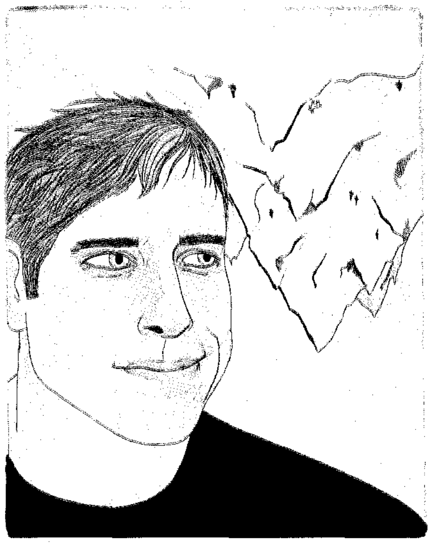
Marie Christine—In his freely adapted musical version of "Medea," Michael John LaChiusa wants to move the musical toward opera; in other words, to turn a popular form into an élitist one. But "Marie Christine" is not an opera. It is also not a musical. It is an empty vessel that makes a big sound: call it an "opsical." Set in New Orleans and Chicago, the show deals with the blighted love between a Creole woman (Audra McDonald) and her feckless white boyfriend (Anthony Crivello), and it touches on Big Issues about which LaChiusa, who is high on technique and ambition and low on talent, has nothing to say: racism, miscegenation, love, revenge. The production has Christopher Barreca's handsome, brooding set; gorgeous lighting by Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer; David Pleasant's sensational bongo playing; Graciela Daniele's fluid staging; and, most important, the extraordinary voice of Ms. McDonald, who is a force of nature. But all this prowess is in aid of a weak story, in which the audience never has a stake. (12/20/99) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Maybe Baby, It's You—Love in the big city, explained with many laughs by the show's accomplished writer-performers, Charlie Shanian and Shari Simpson. There's an undercurrent of sweetness and longing that makes the evening more than a series of skits—it's what you instinctively know at thirty but wish you'd learned at twenty. Directed with a sure, light touch by Jeremy Dobrish. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 239-6200.)

The Price—In Arthur Miller's 1968 play, a failed, dutiful brother, who thinks that life has given him a bad deal, cuts another bad deal, this time with a furniture dealer. But when his successful sibling turns up, the play becomes a negotiation about their family history, an agreement that can't be reached. As the rivalry is played out, the audience watches the riveting spectacle of a man clinging to a self-destructive illusion, despite all evidence to the contrary. As a metaphor for our culture of complaint, it ain't bad. And neither are the performances. "The Price" is not a waste of time, which is saying a lot on Broadway these days. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Putting It Together—A revue celebrating the songs of Stephen Sondheim, starring Carol Burnett. Directed by Eric D. Schaeffer. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

The Rainmaker—As wholesome and satisfying as a glass of milk, N. Richard Nash's 1954 drama is a sunny, old-fashioned valentine of a play that hits on big themes (loneliness, trust, love) with a light touch. Starbuck, played by an exuberant Woody Harrelson, is a flashy evangelist of rain who arrives at a family farm in the throes of drought and dissatisfaction; he inadvertently solves both problems with a confidence game that works out for everyone. Jayne Atkinson is wonderful as the sensible spinster who tries to resist Starbuck's charms, as are Randle Mell, as her stiff would-be suitor, and Jerry Hardin, as her well-intentioned father. A confection, a delight. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)



LARA TOMLIN

SECOND BÊTE: *The forty-one-year-old playwright David Hirson racked up a lot of awards and nominations for his first play, "La Bête," which ran on Broadway in 1991, but for only a month. It was just the kind of show you'd expect to dazzle some critics, infuriate others, and puzzle mainstream audiences: a tribute to Molière, set in the seventeenth century and written in rhyming couplets, in which a bombastic actor takes over an acting company. This month, Hirson's second play, "Wrong Mountain," will also open on Broadway, and it has all the markings of an equally, if not more, confounding work, with what may be a hint of emotional autobiography. A marginal and bitter poet (played by Ron Rifkin) who happens to be host to a tremendous tapeworm, becomes consumed with the challenge of proving to a playwright (his ex-wife's husband) that anyone can write a show to please the masses. They make a bet for a hundred thousand dollars; to win, the poet must simply get his new play, also titled "Wrong Mountain," produced.*

Saturday Night Fever—The musical, based on the 1977 film. (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Sex—The 1926 show that launched Mae West's career by putting her in jail. She wrote and starred in this brazen melodrama, about a prostitute who's on the lookout for a rich man but finds happiness instead. The play is certainly dated, but the cast is game and the evening is fun; the double- (and single-) entendre songs that open the second act are a real delight. The director, Elyse Singer, does a fine logistical job in very tight quarters, but she adds distracting snippets from West's trial to the script, as a prologue to each act. Mae West, even incarnated by someone else (in this case, Carolyn Baeumler), doesn't need explaining. (Gershwin Hotel Living Room, 7 E. 27th St. 439-8112.)

Swing!—A musical salute to the genre, directed and choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Tango Argentino—An encore staging of the great 1985 dance revue. Nine pomaded couples, together with four excellent singers, tell us everything there is to know about the love that kills. The sexiest, most glamorous, most virtuosic dancing on Broadway. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 9.)

Theatre of Light—A non-computer-generated light show by Rudi Stern, accompanied by projections of hand-painted images and set to the music of Peter Gabriel, Donovan, and DeFalla, among others. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. 800-965-4827. Closes Jan. 7.)

Trudy Blue—The latest play from Marsha Norman ("'night, Mother") explores the pitfalls of the writer's life: a novelist finds herself almost unable to distinguish between the characters she invents and talks to all day long and her real family. It's a common theme, but superbly told in this rendition, and the simple lesson—that sometimes life is better in the real world than inside your head—is one that's all too easy to forget. Polly Draper plays the writer; Julia McIlvaine, as her thirteen-year-old daughter, steals the show with an intelligent, composed performance. Directed by Michael Sexton. (MCC, 120 W. 28th St. 727-7765. Closes Jan. 9.)

The Vagina Monologues—Eve Ensler's one-woman show is based on interviews she conducted with two hundred women about their vaginas. There's a certain amount of shtick involved, but most of the stories she tells are touching and memorable. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.)

Waiting in the Wings—In the best of Noël Coward's postwar plays, old gallant theatricals duke it out in a retirement home, where they fire off some terrific one-liners. The set is too spick-and-span for musty England in the sixties, and some of director Michael Langham's casting leaves a bit to be desired, but the evening has its old-time pleasures. Although the play itself is somewhat creaky, the pros who bring it to life here aren't: Bette Henritze, Elizabeth Wilson, Rosemary Harris, Dana Ivey, and the evergreen Lauren Bacall. La Bacall is just too glamorous and too famous for the faded company her character keeps; the day she goes to the retirement home is the day gallstones become jewelry. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Y2K—As up to the minute as the Melissa virus and the Explore.Zip worm, Arthur Kopit's drama brings news of the cyber-abuse of privacy and shows us how personal history can be rewritten at a computer hacker's whim. A young cyber-subversive named Costra Astrakhan (the furtive Erik Jensen) invades the lives of the Eliots (James Naughton and Patricia Kalember), a suave Park Avenue couple. He is a fiction editor at Random House, she works in the ceramics department at Sotheby's, but Astrakhan supplies them with compelling new profiles: he as a child pornographer, she as a porn star. Strategically, Kopit wants to challenge the solidity of both the Eliots' and the audience's sense of reality. Nothing is what it seems. But it is also part of the playwright's plan to put us exactly where the two anguished protagonists sit—at first bemused, then outraged, then no longer quite sure even of their coherence. Underneath the cyber-thriller aspect of the story, Kopit's sense of the bewildering mystery and fragility of relationships comes through loud and chillingly clear. (12/20/99) (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200).

LONG RUNS

ANNIE GET YOUR GUN: Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST:** Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CABARET:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CHICAGO:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **DE LA GUARDA:** Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FOOTLOOSE:** Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY:** Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200. . . . **FOSSE:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH:** Jane Street Theatre, Hotel Riverview Ballroom, 113 Jane St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **IT AIN'T NOTHIN' BUT THE BLUES:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. (Closes Jan. 9.) . . . **JEKYLL & HYDE:** Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LATE-NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE LION KING:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **OVER THE RIVER AND THROUGH THE WOODS:** John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RAGTIME:** Ford Center for the Performing Arts, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **SECRETS EVERY SMART TRAVELER SHOULD KNOW:** Ibis, 327 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **WIT:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

New York City Ballet—Jan. 4 at 8: "Garland Dance," "Valse Triste," "Valse-Fantaisie," "The Waltz Project," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ Jan. 5 at 8: "Mozartiana," "The Waltz Project," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ Jan. 6 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Valse-Fantaisie," "Fancy Free," and "Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2." . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 8: "Mozartiana," "Agon," and "Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2." . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 2: "In G Major," "Zakouski," "Valse Triste," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 8: "Agon," "Fancy Free," and "Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No. 2." . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 3: "Concerto Barocco," "Valse-Fantaisie," "The Waltz Project," and "Vienna Waltzes." . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 8: "Agon," "Zakouski," "Valse Triste," and "In G Major." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 27.)

Doug Varone & Dancers—The eight-member company presents five premières, including "Tomorrow," set to Belle Époque-style love songs by Reynaldo Hahn, "Agora," a work that imagines a utopia of frank communication, and "Polonaise #44," a duet for the choreographer and longtime company member Gwen Welliver. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 4-8 at 8 and Jan. 9 at 2 and 7:30.)

"Food for Thought: Bagnolet Platform"—At this installment of Danspace Project's regular food drive cum performance (bring two cans of food for local charities and tickets are half price), dancegoers can tuck into a full menu of downtown dance. The selection (at Danspace and the Joyce SoHo) allows for quick introductions to what the companies consider their best work—they are competing for the chance to perform at an international competition that will reward its winner with a year's concert tour. At Danspace: Jan. 7 at 8:30: Mark Haim, Jeremy Nelson & Luis Lara, and Wil Swanson. . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 8:30: Seán Curran, Mark Jarecke, and Lisa Race. . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 8:30: Dorfman & Froot, Allyson Green, and Koosil-ja Hwang. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194.) . . . At Joyce SoHo: Jan. 7 at 6: Eun Me Ahn and Ben Munisteri. . . . ¶ Jan. 8 at 6: Wally Cardona and Donna Uchizono. . . . ¶ Jan. 9 at 6: Gina Gibney and Dorothy Jungels/Everett Dance Theatre. (155 Mercer St. 334-7479.)

"Emerging Dance from Japan"—Four companies offer a work apiece: The ten-member Condors troupe brings "Conquest of the Galaxy: Jupiter," the Tokyo-based Arrow Dance Communication presents "Space 6," Fisherman's Art Factory Yan-Shu performs "Zuunja: Narrow Your Eyes, Down Your Chin," and Kenshi Nohmi & Theatre 21 close the evening with "Two Shadows." (Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. 752-3015. Jan. 8 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

Andy Statman—The master clarinettist plays bluegrass and Eastern European soul music with equal aplomb. Long before klezmer was hip, Statman was reaching back to the shtetl with his mournful horn and pushing forward to the New World with his mandolin fusions. His last two recordings, "Between Heaven and Earth" and "Hidden Light," brought fervent modal jazz and Jewish melodies together in beautiful, appropriate tandem. (Greenwich Village Synagogue, 53 Charles St. Tickets at the door. Jan. 6 at 8.)

The Ted Nash Quintet—The canny, ever-adventurous composer and saxophonist Nash, a linchpin of the Jazz Composer's Collective, leads a quintet featuring Miri Ben-Ari on violin, Bill Shimmel on accordion, Wycliffe Gordon on tuba and trombone, and Jeff Ballard on drums. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9491. Jan. 7 at 5:30.)

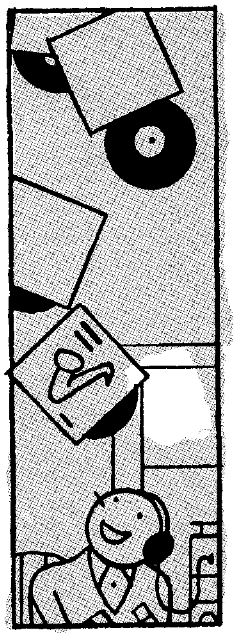
CLUBS

(Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Arlene Grocery, 95 Stanton St., between Ludlow and Orchard Sts. (358-1633)—A narrow, dimly lit renovated bodega that's the ideal environment for three to five unknown bands a night struggling their way out of obscurity.

JAZZ NOTES

Six of our favorites from 1999.



"Evolution," John Lewis (Atlantic)—Milt Jackson's death this year meant the official end of the illustrious Modern Jazz Quartet, but pianist Lewis, the M.J.Q.'s leader, perseveres with this beautifully recorded solo project, which finds the grand minimalist speaking volumes with the subtlest of note choices. His steely touch and pared-to-the-bone approach once again reveal the formal foundations and expressive undercurrents of both standards and the pianist's own classics.

"The Illinois Concert," Eric Dolphy (Blue Note)—The jazz find of the year has to be this previously unreleased disk, which captures the legendary saxophone, flute, and bass-clarinet virtuoso a year before his death, in 1964. Dolphy is revved up and playing near his best as he leads a quartet—featuring a just emerging yet already striking Herbie Hancock on piano—and takes some outrageous chances, including a startling, unaccompanied "God Bless the Child."

"Relativity," Marty Ehrlich, Peter Erskine, Michael Formanek (Enja)—A stylistic descendant of Eric Dolphy, Ehrlich has a musical arsenal that includes a wide range of saxes, flutes, and clarinets, and he also embraces both conventional and more experimental jazz forms. "Relativity," a free-jazz-tinged outing recorded with bassist Formanek and drummer Erskine, is a collective project; everyone composes and gets plenty of solo spots. But Ehrlich's musical personality dominates due to his commanding instrumental abilities (his infrequently heard but exceptional tenor-saxophone playing stands out) and his rare knack for thoroughly personalizing the material of others.

"Another Shade of Blue," Lee Konitz (Blue Note)—The septuagenarian alto saxophonist Konitz plays as if he were at the peak of his career on this live recording with pianist Brad Meldhau and bassist Charlie Haden. Konitz, an adherent of pure improvisation—clichés and stock phrases are just not in his repertoire—brilliantly recasts a few standards and some basic blues from the bottom up. His newly chiselled reading of "What's New" is an improvisation for the time capsule.

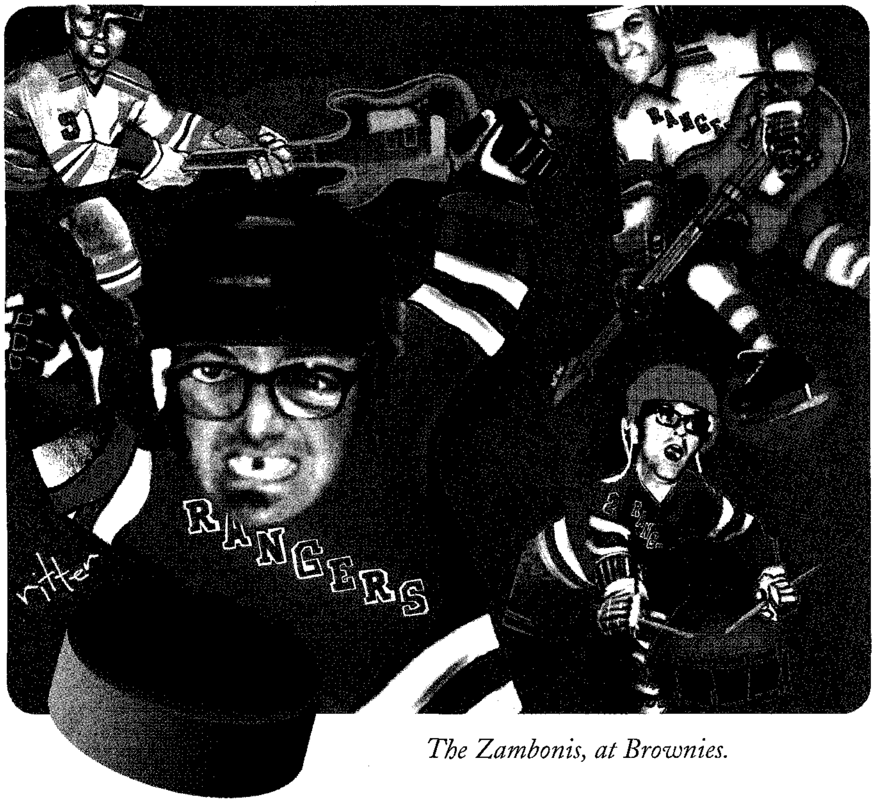
"Born to Play," Ruby Braff (Arbors)—This cornettist has never enjoyed a high profile, but among the faithful, he's counted as one of the greatest of mainstream brassmen. Amazingly, on "Born to Play," Braff's regal tone and poised phrasing are even more pronounced than they were when he made waves in the nineteen-fifties. His musicianly daring is echoed in the atypical instrumentation he surrounds himself with: two bassists, three guitarists, a clarinettist, and a drummer.

"Live in Middelheim," Masada (Tzadik)—John Zorn may be contentious and controversial, but he doesn't mess around when it comes to leading Masada, his wildly exciting jazz quartet. This disk finds Zorn (on alto saxophone), trumpeter Dave Douglas, bassist Greg Cohen, and drummer Joey Baron in righteous form. Masada has mingled Eastern-European Jewish strains with new-jazz tropes on a dozen albums, but this in-concert recording shows that the idea is as fresh and bracing as it was at the outset.

LAURENT CILLUFFO

Bowery Ballroom, 6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Jan. 8: **ZEN TRICKSTERS,** the erstwhile Grateful Dead cover band, is now bent on its own strange trip of improvisational jams.

Brownies, 169 Avenue A, at 10th St. (420-8392)—Jan. 7: **THE ZAMBONIS,** a Connecticut-based quartet that writes songs exclusively about ice hockey, may sound like a simple novelty act, but it scores repeatedly with a bunch of snappy little power-pop songs. Even if you wouldn't know what a slap shot was if it hit you in the face, you'll cheer for the ska-infused song "The Breakaway," the punky "Lost My Teeth," and the unexpectedly tender country love song "Great Zamboni of Devotion," which includes the line "Oh how I wish / I could be the mustard on your knish." With the raunchy faux-French rock and roll of the Brooklyn-based **LES SANS CULOTTES.**



The Zambonis, at Brownies.

The Campbell Apartment, 15 Vanderbilt Ave. (953-0409)—One part history, one part fantasy, this beautiful lounge tucked away inside the newly restored Grand Central Terminal is as smooth as a perfect Manhattan. The space—with twenty-five-foot-high faux-wood-beamed ceilings, stained-glass windows, and stone walls—was leased in 1923 by a financial executive named John W. Campbell, who used it as a private office where he reportedly entertained friends. The current owners restored the room and added a bar, a pool table, and plush chairs. Each evening a crush of office workers stops by, hoping to reclaim a little of New York's faded glamour. If you visit during a less crowded time, such as after a show, you might just succeed.

Connolly's, 14 E. 47th St. (867-3767)—Jan. 8: Under the leadership of the tradition-rattling Celtic-music gadfly Larry Kirwan, the raucously rocking **BLACK 47** has become an American version of the Pogues—only with a wider musical point of view and fewer barroom brawls.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 7: **GARY LUCAS'S GODS & MONSTERS.** The guitarist from the cult outfit Captain Beefheart and the Magic Band, Lucas is revered by a small but fiercely devoted following. Gods & Monsters, Lucas's current ensemble, showcases his twisted guitar work with less wit, but his playing is undeniably original, something that employers such as Jeff Buckley and Joan Osborne have clearly noticed. Lucas's latest recording, "Paradiso," highlights his fondness for the steel guitar. Jan. 8: **THURSTON MOORE'S NEW YEAR'S NOISE 2000.** The grand pooh-bah of Sonic Youth—the band that's done for noise what John Cage did for silence—hosts a special evening of musical screeds and spleen. Moore's peripatetic dabbling can get a bit windy, but noise always brings out the best in him (which is why he remains such an inspiring figure to all self-respecting downtown hipsters). This year he's joined by the **WHARTON TIERS ENSEMBLE** and the Florida-based weirdness of **MONOTRACT.**

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Jan. 6: One of the first artists to embrace the notion of home taping, New Jersey guitarist **R STEVIE MOORE** has turned out hundreds of tapes and more than a dozen albums over the past thirty years. With a stylistic range as vast as his output, there's no telling what this live show will hold. At the least, though, it offers a chance to see one of rock's true underground heroes.

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—Jan. 6: **BASEMENT BHANGRA,** an evening of ecstatic, futuristic dance music which fuses an ancient Punjabi harvest festival with the technological wonders of underground London. The d.j.s Rekkha and Joy spice the infectious *dohl* drumbeat with pinches of classical raga, old-school hip-hop, dub reggae, and the occasional Malcolm X outburst or car crash. The frenetic but friendly dance floor is awhirl with turbans and saris, and Indian film clips are projected as a backdrop. This monthly party makes your average world-music event seem as bland as Esperanto. Jan. 10: **BIO RITMO,** the only salsa band from Richmond, Virginia, with a major-label deal. The outfit is saved from its humble geographic origins by its native Cuban leader and arranger, René Herrera, and it tosses together Afro-Cuban rhythms, English and Spanish lyrics, and lounge influences with surprisingly entertaining results. Dining.

Wetlands, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—Jan. 7: A night of techno-laden jam-band music with **THE NEW DEAL, LAKE TROUT,** and **BROTHER'S PAST.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**MARY CLEERE HARAN,** a great performer who mixes barbed comic observations with genuine scholarly enthusiasm, is here through Jan. 8. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Jan. 5-8: The **JOE CHAMBERS** quintet. Heavyweights young and old, including saxophonist **GARY BARTZ,** trumpeter **DONALD BYRD,** pianist **ERIC REED,** and bassist **IRA COLEMAN,** are on hand to flesh out the captivating compositions of drummer Chambers, a Blue Note mainstay of the sixties who never received the recognition accorded the name artists whose recordings he helped illuminate. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Jan. 9: The **GATO BARBIERI** quintet. The Argentinean tenor saxophonist Barbieri has a sensuous tone and a résumé that includes everything from avant-garde work in the sixties to composing the score for "Last Tango in Paris." Dining.

Iridium, 48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Jan. 9: The **SOUL SURVIVORS.** Keyboardist **LONNIE SMITH,** guitarist **CORNELL DUPREE,** and saxophonist **ERNIE WATTS** are soul-jazz mainstays who have collectively played with everyone from Aretha Franklin and Lou Donaldson to Charlie Haden and the Rolling Stones. If history is destiny, things will get funky. Mondays belong to electric-guitar innovator **LES PAUL.**

Jazz Standard, 116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Jan. 9: Jazz doesn't want for master pianists, but there's only one **TOMMY FLANAGAN.** Tone, touch, taste, technique—he's got it all. But Flanagan's also a poet, which is the key to his omnipotence. His spontaneous inventions have the formal perfection of written melodies. His choruses startle you with their beauty, leaving you spoiled for any other pianist. With Flanagan's imaginative repertoire and the almost alarming unity of his trio, it doesn't get any better. Jan. 10: The exceptional Cuban singer **JUAN-CARLOS FORMELL** doesn't rest on the glory of his family's heritage. The son of Los Van Van leader Juan Formell (and grandson of legendary arranger Francisco Formell) moved to New York four years ago, and he's been reinvigorating traditional Cuban music with all his heart. Dining.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 6-9: **DAVID MURRAY'S CREOLE PROJECT.** Saxophonist Murray has spent the better part of the nineties soaking up inspiration from all over the globe: projects have included work with African, French, and Caribbean musicians, as well as New York funksters. His forays into Guadeloupean musical culture, documented on his album "Creole," have been particularly successful. Live, this spicy stew of tropical rhythms and gutbucket saxophone should rock the house.

Makor, 35 W. 67th St. (601-1000)—Jan. 12: Jazz, Latin, and Middle Eastern strains come together in bassist **AVISHAI COHEN'S** ensemble, which, along with the leader's buoyant playing, finds room for trombone, soprano saxophone, and the occasional *oud* interjection.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 7: "Mercurial Visions." What better way to celebrate the new century than by evoking the interdisciplinary collages of the nineteen-sixties? Taking over this rock-oriented back room will be a slew of avant jazz musicians, dancers, and painters, all presumably willing to mix and match to their art's content. The jazz quotient is actually quite high, featuring the cream of the city's most outré players, including pianist **MATTHEW SHIPP,** violinist **MAT MANIERI,** and guitarist **JOE MORRIS.**

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Jan. 9: The **WYNTON MARSALIS** septet. As the new seven-CD boxed set "Live at the Village Vanguard" makes abundantly clear, Marsalis's heart, and best instincts as a bandleader and composer, lie with a small ensemble. The tight, clustered sound inspires Marsalis the trumpet player:

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his bravura passages have a directness and purpose that can be subsumed when he works within the confines of his full-time band, the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. If previous Vanguard stints are any indication, it would be best to arrive hours, if not days, before show time to insure a seat. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

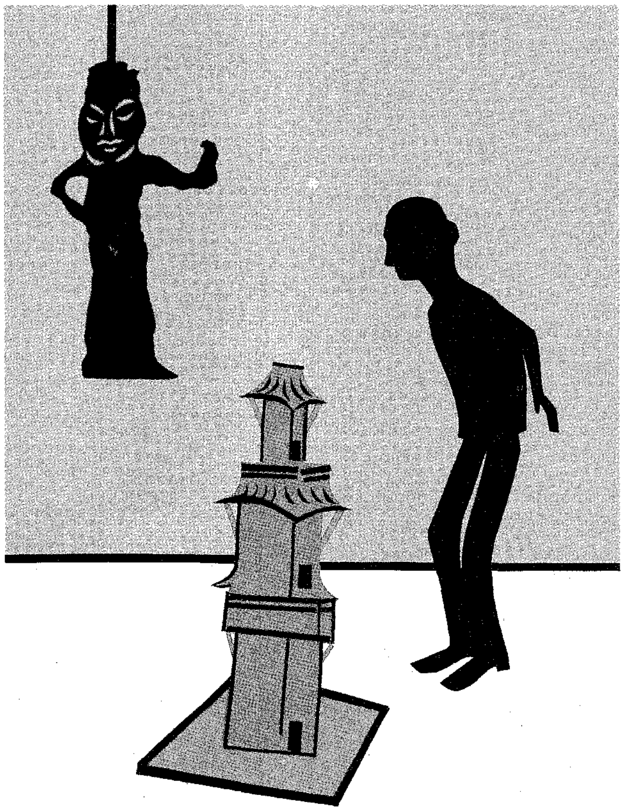
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—"Only the Best," the title of an exhibition of eighty works from the Gulbenkian Museum in Lisbon, may sound like fatuous P.R., but the show itself makes good on its promise. The founder of the collection, the Armenian oil magnate Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian (1869-1955), known as Mr. Five Percent for the fee he retained for helping reorganize oil companies in the Middle East, began collecting as a child, starting with antique coins; by the time of his death he had amassed a princely trove of nearly six thousand works of art, from the ancient Egyptians to the Impressionists. Gulbenkian didn't have an adventurous eye, but he certainly had a discriminating one. The show's many highlights include examples of Ming porcelain, Turkish carpets, and rococo silver, as well as exceptional paintings by Watteau, Fragonard, Rubens, Gainsborough, Turner, and Manet. It's almost a relief to find a few pieces, such as a bland life-size statue of Apollo by Houdon, that are second rate. Through Feb. 27. . . . ¶ From Elvis Presley's gold lamé suit, visibly worn at the knees, to the varied sartorial inspirations of Mick, Cher, Diana Ross, and Bono, "Rock Style" at the Costume Institute offers an adulatory MTV-style walk down memory lane. Among the most notable outfits is the magnificently weird jumpsuit of quilted vinyl worn by David Bowie for his "Ziggy Stardust" tour. Designed by Kansai Yamamoto but clearly inspired by early Frank Stella, it's a sort of theatrically hermaphroditic incarnation of sixties Minimalism. Other highlights include dresses made from turquoise ostrich feathers (Cher) and razor blades (Deborah Harry), along with Madonna's ever-provocative pinnacled bodices. After so much spectacle and opulence, the real shocker here is a mannequin dressed, in retail flannel and black denim, as Bruce Springsteen. Through March 19. . . . ¶ "Carleton Watkins: The Art of Perception" presents more than a hundred and twenty-five images by this pioneer of photography, who recorded the vastness of the American West. Through Jan. 9. . . . ¶ "Egyptian Art in the Age of the Pyramids," a sombre and ravishing survey of five hundred years of the millennia of Egyptian dynasties, covers the Old Kingdom (2650-2150 B.C.), the glorious formative period of Pharaonic art when the great pyramids were built and religious statuary rose to a refined naturalism. Through Jan. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—"Modern Starts" comprises three shows featuring works drawn from MOMA's permanent collection, all focussed on the years *1880-1920*. "People" runs through Feb. 1; "Places" and "Things" through March 14. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—A retrospective devoted to the Neapolitan painter Francesco Clemente presents more than two hundred paintings, frescoes, watercolors, pastels, sculptures, illustrations, and collaborative works. Through Jan. 9. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Part two of "The American Century" is a vast improvement over its predecessor, and not just because American art gathered momentum after the Second World War. The exhibition design as a whole is clearer: film clips and "historical" displays have been segregated to small side rooms, so they don't compete directly with the nearly seven hundred art works. On the upper floors, curator Lisa Phillips succeeds in making a familiar story feel almost fresh. The Abstract Expressionist gallery is a pleasure, and the appearance of a Chuck Close portrait in a room devoted to Minimalism seems smartly provocative. Only in the later rooms do the skewed priorities and omissions begin to become apparent. From this show you could learn a lot about television sitcoms of the seventies, but you would never know, for example, that the decade witnessed a major revival of representational painting. The exhibition ends with a whimper: can the nineties really have been as sterile a decade as it seems here? Don't believe it. Through Feb. 13. (Open Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)



Sculptures by Anne Chu, at AC Project Room.

KIM DEMARCO

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY, Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—*National Geographic* meets the East Village in "Body Art: Marks of Identity," which features Pre-Colombian nose ornaments from Peru beside contemporary photographs of the pierced and tattooed natives of New York and San Francisco. Through May 29. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART, Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Eastman Johnson: Painting America" is a fascinating retrospective exhibition, the first in more than twenty-five years, of Winslow Homer's greatest rival. In many ways, the two Yankee painters were similar: both trained in Boston print shops, painted firsthand scenes of the Civil War, and made pioneering images of newly emancipated slaves. During most of their lifetimes, however, Johnson, twelve years older, was by far the more established and successful artist. Several of Homer's best-loved early canvases (notably "Snap the Whip") were almost certainly modelled on paintings by Johnson. In later life, however, Johnson settled into a sentimental tidiness, delighting in modest delicacies of chiaroscuro, texture, and color. "Of all our artists he has the most coquetry of manipulation," Henry James wrote. There are dozens of impressive works here, including his masterpiece "The Cranberry Pickers," but none that really belies James's gentle dismissal. Through Feb. 6. . . . ¶ "Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection." Through Jan. 9. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JEWISH MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (423-3200)—Kaiser Wilhelm II was a notorious killjoy, but the era named after him saw a giddy efflorescence of artistic, theatrical, and literary innovation, admirably surveyed in "Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1880-1914." German Jews, excluded from government, the military, and the universities, played a major role in these developments, from the Berlin Secession of 1899 to the beginning of the film industry. There's a lot here (more than two hundred and fifty objects are on display, from paintings, posters, and film clips to vitrines full of memorabilia), but curator Emily D. Bilski has kept urban sprawl in check by focussing on the lives of a few prominent individuals such as Max Liebermann, Herwalth Walden, and Ernst Lubitsch. There are a few odd gaps (only one painting by the young Max Beckmann?), but this is a festive, cogent show. Through April 23. . . . ¶ "John Singer Sargent: Portraits of the Wertheimer Family." Through Feb. 6. (Open Sundays through Thursdays, 11 to 5:45, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

THE NEW MUSEUM, 583 Broadway (219-1222)—If you associate interactivity with the glow of your computer screen, then this retrospective of works by the influential Brazilian artist Cildo Meireles will be an eye-opening—not to mention sock-and-shoe-removing—experience. "Red Shift" is a three-room installation created in response to Brazil's reign of terror in the late sixties. It ends with a sink askew on a wall, its tap flowing red—theatricality overblown to the point of melodrama. More effective is the poetic, frightening "Volatile," which takes you barefoot (follow instructions, please) through a darkened J-shaped chamber lit by a single flame and filled with several tons of gray talc and the smell of natural gas. Through March 5. (Open Wednesdays and Sundays, noon to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, noon to 8.)

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. (869-8089)—"Seeing Is Believing" is a lavish, eclectic exhibition of scientific and medical illustrations, from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. Among the most spectacular works are Robert Hooke's "Micrographia" (the first book devoted to microscopic observations), open to a centerfold of a gigantic flea, and Andreas Vesalius's great anatomy textbook, "De Humani Corporis Fabrica," with its heroic flayed-muscle figures, believed to have been drawn by the studio of Titian. Much of what's on view is deliciously gruesome, elaborate, or fanciful. After a sequence of fantastical medieval cosmologies, Copernicus's heliocentric version seems disappointingly staid. Through Feb. 19. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 7:30.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

LESLIE BOHNENKAMP (1943-97)—In the early seventies, Bohnenkamp began making standing conical sculptures out of horsehair and jute. By the end of the decade, he had switched from fabric to paper, coiling strips of it into tapering forms that resemble shells or tusks. The examples here, all modestly sized, appear singly, in pairs, and in "herds" of as many as eighty pieces. At their best, the works have a wobbly delicacy that suggests a tantalizing range of affiliations, from entomology to biomorphic cartooning to the sculptures of Martin Puryear. Sadly, just as Bohnenkamp was beginning to explore these possibilities, he was struck by a car while crossing a New York street. He never recovered fully, and his working career ended long before his death. Through Jan. 15. (Rickards, 1045 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 924-0858.)

MARCEL DUCHAMP (1887-1968)—After making his infamous icons of aesthetic indifference—the urinal, the snow shovel, the defaced "Mona Lisa"—the lethargic French expatriate didn't have many further ideas. He was aware, however, that adoring rich Americans like the Arensbergs were willing to pay for art objects, if he could produce some. What to do? With typical candor, Duchamp turned his own sterility into a wry gimmick, creating limited-edition facsimilies and variations of his own most famous pieces. More than a hundred of them are on view here, in a reliquary-style display intended for diehard Duchampions. Through Jan. 15. (Achim Moeller, 167 E. 73rd St. 988-4500.)

JAMES WYETH—New paintings from the art world's answer to George W. Along with distinguished bloodlines and summers in Maine, the young Wyeth shares the young Bush's lunkish vigor. When he exerts himself to make a bold statement, expect a pratfall. Several of the largest paintings here show mysterious girls in pigtails leading goats through storms—Wyeth's illustrator grandfather would have blushed to sign them. Far more successful are smaller studies of gulls feeding on crabs and sea urchins. In these stark and painterly images the artist, like his political counterpart, doesn't try to disguise the fact that he's riding his father's coattails, and that he's having a pretty darn good time doing it. Through Jan. 15. (Graham, 1014 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 535-5767.)

"SAVED FROM EUROPE"—A distinguished loan show commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of this gallery, and the escape of Otto Kallir, its founder. Fleeing the Nazis in 1938, Kallir arrived in New York a year later with a trove of work by modern Austrian and German artists, at that time little known in this country. Among the more than fifty paintings, prints, and drawings reunited here are masterworks by Kokoschka, Schiele, and especially Klimt, including the latter's superb painting of a tiny calm infant hidden within a maelstrom of brightly patterned blankets. Through Jan. 8. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734.)

SHORT LIST—**CARROLL BECKWITH**, Berry-Hill, 11 E. 70th St. 744-2300. Through Jan. 15. . . . **BURGOYNE DILLER**, Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082. Through Jan. 8. . . . **LAWRENCE GIPE**, Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Through Jan. 22. . . . **MORRIS GRAVES**, Schmidt Bingham, 41 E. 57th St. 888-1122. Through Feb. 12. . . . **CILDO MEIRELES**, Galerie Lelong, 20 W. 57th St. 315-0470. Through Jan. 15. . . . **JAN MÜLLER** and **BOB THOMPSON**, Bookstein, 50 E. 78th St. 439-9605. Through Jan. 8. . . .

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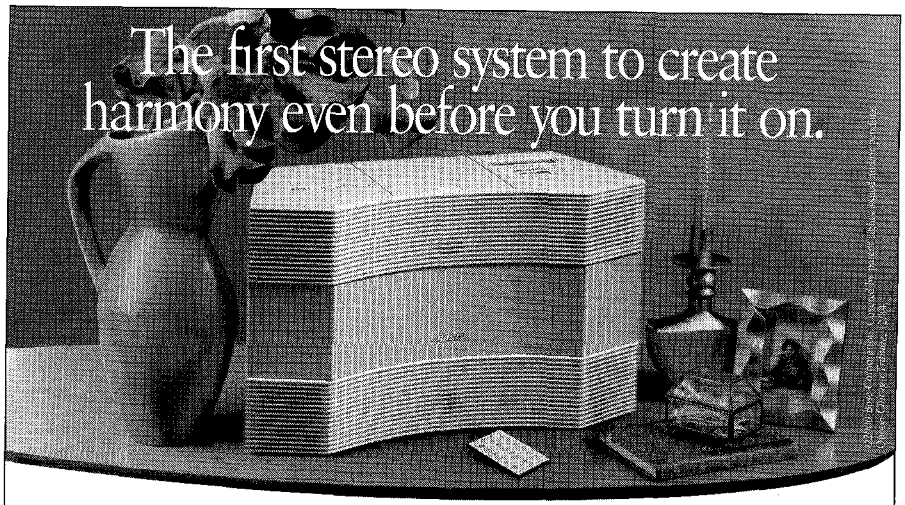
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RICHARD SERRA, Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. 744-2313. Through Jan. 14. (See also Galleries—Chelsea.) . . . **DOROTHEA TANNING,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through Jan. 22. . . . **CHEN YIFEI,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; through Jan. 15.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Anne Chu—A beautiful, crowded show of sculptures and watercolors inspired by classical Chinese sources, including T'ang-dynasty ceramics and scholar's rocks. Chu moves between mediums, shifting from urethane to bronze to ceramic with impressive ease. But it's the immediacy and energy of the painted, rough-hewn wood that prove the most engaging and also best flaunt her skills as a colorist. The show's centerpiece, "View of Gorge," is a pair of mountains—one a sunny yellow, the other the pink of dawn—that transform the gallery into a room with a view. Through Jan. 15. (AC Project Room, 453 W. 17 St. 645-4970.)

Matthew McCaslin—No need to drive to Queens to see the Christmas lights. This kaleidoscopic show, inspired by the sights at Coney Island and other amusement parks, beats the reindeer-on-the-roof displays by a mile. Televisions are attached to metal rods and fanned out like so many cars on a carnival ride; fireworks, electric lights, and computer-manipulated psychedelic imagery can be seen on the monitors. The clanging, whirring soundtracks heighten the atmosphere of spectacle, until you feel that your ride might break free of the track. McCaslin's best show in years. Through Jan. 15. (Feigen, 535 W. 20th St. 929-0500.)

Thomas Scheibitz—Switch-hitting between architectonic abstraction and landscape, this up-and-coming young German artist paints with sure-handed clarity, and a palette of bright, yogurty colors. As in his last show, the abstractions are effortlessly handsome: imagine Sol LeWitt's wall decorations painted with the brisk nonchalance of Raoul Dufy. The landscapes, however, with their picket fences, huge spiky flowers, and picturesque mountain chalets, suggest a more puzzling and compelling use of Scheibitz's talents. An artist to watch. Through Jan. 15. (Bonakdar Jancou, 521 W. 21st St. 414-4144.)

Richard Serra—The man of steel is back and better than ever, inaugurating the latest (and most gargantuan) outpost of the Gagosian empire. Six curving monoliths, each fifty-two feet long and thirteen and a half feet high, are installed in a triangular configuration. A series of narrow passages converge in a central space that recalls either a Zendo or lockdown, depending on your mood. The planar shifts of the soaring, rusted slabs make you feel that you're both within and outside of the sculpture. A rare opportunity to use the words "graceful" and "two-ton" in the same sentence. Through Feb. 26. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111. See also Uptown Short List.)

"Loaf"—Twenty-one sculptures loafing around, independent of presentation devices such as shelves, vitrines, or, for the most part, pedestals. Some objects plop right down on the floor, like Louise Bourgeois's gleaming bronze with gold patina, "End of Softness." Others stand tall, like Barry X. Ball's indescribably freaky black-and-white porcelain-like "Flayed Herm." Materials run the gamut from beeswax to steel, as biomorphic abstraction meets realism (if you can call Carl Dalvia's bright-orange conflation of surrealism and modernist furniture "real.") Any way you slice it, it's a great show. Through Jan. 15. (Baumgartner, 418 W. 15th St. 633-2276.)

Short List—**CHRISTOPH DRAEGER,** Liebman Magnan, 552 W. 24th St. 255-3225. Through Jan. 22. . . . **DAN FLAVIN,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Through Jan. 29. . . . **EWAN GIBBS,** Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752. Through Jan. 22. . . . **POURAN JINCHI,** Nikolai, 505 W. 22nd St. 414-8511. Through Jan. 29. . . . **JOHN MILLER,** Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100. Through Jan. 22. . . . **KELLIE O'BOSKY,** Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555. Through Jan. 29. . . . **SUSA TEMPLIN,** Au Base, 433 W. 14th St. 414-0563. Through Jan. 22.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Reverend Ethan Acres—This Vegas-based preacher-slash-artist wants to "put the fun back in fundamentalism," trading in his pulpit for a galleryful of sculptures, ranging from plagues of frogs and locusts to a rotating lamb of God and a star made of matchsticks, reminiscent of tramp art. The soft-sculpture insects, swarming across the wall with heads of soldiers and missiles for tails, are more Jim Henson than Claes Oldenburg—a Biblical Muppet show. Through Jan. 22. (Keenan, 3 Crosby St. 431-5083.)

Robert Breer—The artist is well known in experimental film circles for his abstract animations, but until now his paintings, made in Paris in the fifties, have never been seen in the States. A cross between Stuart Davis and color-field abstraction, they're appealing but benign. The scene-stealers are a group of motorized "float" sculptures, which creep along the floor at a barely perceptible pace. They're delightful "animations" of form, from a pair of gray plastic convex disks to a red Styrofoam polygon. Also on view are three short films from the sixties and seventies. Through Jan. 29. (Staff USA Gallery, 495 Broadway. 925-9700.)

Martin Kippenberger (1954-97)—The late German artist was the Big Bad Wolf of the art world, huffing and puffing and bringing down the house with his raucous installations, paintings, sculptures, you name it. This lively show attests to his dizzying output and includes selections from the "Hotel Drawings" series, begun in the eighties and created on stationery in hostelries from Zagreb to Los Angeles. Also on view are several madcap collages, one of which incorporates a print by Sigmar Polke and an origami pig. Through Jan. 29. (Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway. 925-6190.)

Issey Miyake—The Ace gallery puts on a museum-quality installation extravaganza (and, like a museum, charges gallerygoers to see it). The entry hall glitters with a gold-and-silver recycling project that stretches from floor to ceiling—cast-off clothes pressed between sheets of foil that betray the shimmering outlines of old socks, jeans, and T-shirts. Miyake has engineered a great range of effects: in one room, sixteen of the designer's airy and outlandish outfits—origami ninja suits, Cat-in-the-Hat party jammies, Noguchi-lamp outfits—bounce in the air with a weird jauntiness. A giant roll of tube-knit black dresses snakes from one mannequin to the next. Down the hall, computer projections of single sheets of fabric morph into dresses or outfits, and projecting this transubstantiation onto the gallery's cement floor creates a ghostly effect—as though only our clothes had the power to rise from the grave. Through Feb. 29. (275 Hudson St. 255-5599.)

Julião Sarmento—A film installation by a Portuguese artist whose evocative paintings lurk in the shadows of voyeurism and sexual obsession, fixing on details of the female body. In the front gallery, a super-8 color film trails a woman, seen from the waist down, in a tight black skirt and stiletto heels, winding her way through narrow cobblestone streets. In the rear gallery, the same footage is screened backward, this time in black-and-white. It's trying to be enigmatic and erotic, but it just feels gratuitous. Through Jan. 22. (Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.)

Aletha Zapf—A modest installation that transforms gallerygoers into tourists. Upon entering, viewers are confronted by the first of Zapf's photographic projections: an image of puzzled-looking strangers with knapsacks and guidebooks. Inside, three more images show milling crowds in the Florence Accademia, accompanied by a soundtrack of polyglot murmurings. To leave, you walk

BOOK CURRENTS

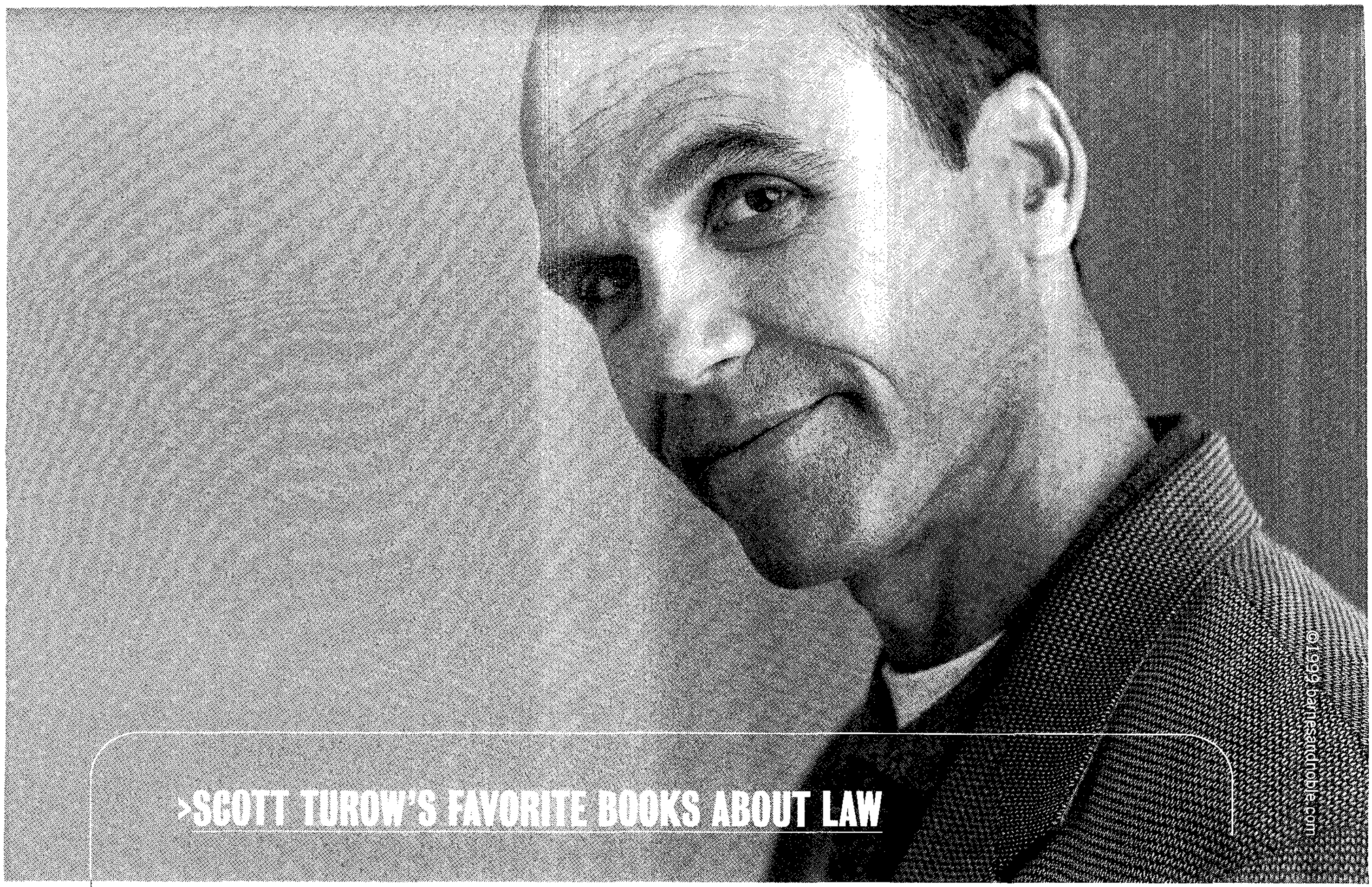
Out There

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

DESPITE the failure of the recent NASA mission to land a probe on Martian soil, the effort represented some bold rethinking at the space agency, which has shifted its post-Apollo attentions toward the consideration of the biggest question there is: Does life exist elsewhere in the universe? In **Captured by Aliens** (Simon & Schuster), Joel Achenbach, a reporter for the Washington *Post,* shows how the resurgent obsession with life on Mars—the very concept still has a pulpy, midcentury ring to it—was stoked in 1995 by the discovery of ALH84001, a meteorite containing what might be the tiny remains of a Martian microbe. (The controversial "nanofossil"—said to resemble a "squiggly Chee-to"—was duly escorted to the Oval Office.)

The extraterrestrial trail led Achenbach to such diverse personalities as the late Carl Sagan and attendees of the annual U.F.O. Congress, who speculated that "Ashtar Command" would soon bring starship technology to Earth. In **Dreamland** (Villard), New York *Times* columnist Phil Patton delves even further into the fringe of ufology, exploring the Cold War history of Area 51, a forbidding tract of Nevada desert reserved by the government for testing cutting-edge aviation and, according to conspiracy buffs, for performing alien autopsies.

The ufologist Kevin D. Randle, who makes a cameo in Achenbach's book, teams up with Russ Estes and William P. Cone (who claims to have been abducted by aliens) for **The Abduction Enigma** (Forge), a look at the seemingly epidemic phenomenon of alien abduction. The authors boldly report that six million Americans believe that they've been abducted by intergalactic travellers—including Louis Farrakhan, who says he made contact with the "mother ship" in 1985. Still, if hyper-intelligent aliens are visiting Earth in droves, why don't they just come out and say so? Achenbach finds an answer in the form of a curious analogy from Erich von Däniken, whose 1968 extraterrestrial classic, **Chariots of the Gods,** has just been reissued by Berkley: "*We* don't make diplomatic contact with chickens."



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>SCOTT TUROW'S FAVORITE BOOKS ABOUT LAW

Billy Budd - Herman Melville

To Kill A Mockingbird - Harper Lee

The Just and The Unjust - James Gould Cozzens

A Theory of Justice - John Rawls

The Rumpole Stories - John Mortimer

Snow Falling on Cedars - David Guterson

A Married Man - Piers Paul Read

The Trial and Death of Socrates - Plato

Bleak House - Charles Dickens

The Merchant of Venice - William Shakespeare

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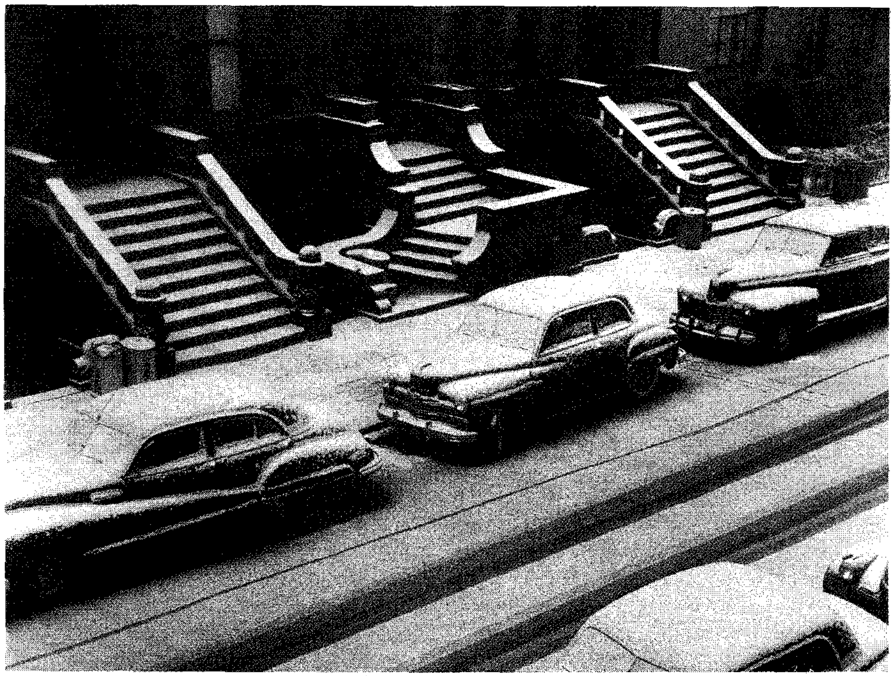


"White Stoops, New York City, 1952," by Ruth Orkin, at Greenberg.

through a curtain on which is projected a final image of culture seekers on their way back to their hotels. People-watching, Zapf gently implies, is a grand tour in itself. Through Jan. 15. (Lee, 377 Broome St. 343-3950.)

"TELEPHONE"—Two L.A. artists, Michael Coughlan and Jory Felice, have come up with a hybrid of the time-honored parlor games Telephone and Exquisite Corpse: one of the artists makes a drawing and describes it to the other over the phone, who re-creates it. The results, all rendered in black ink, are often startlingly similar. The diptychs are most interesting when the image is abstract, like the weird "Me Versus Me." One looks like an Inuit totem, the other like Georgia O'Keeffe on a caffeine jag. Through Jan. 22. (Sara Meltzer's On View, 588 Broadway. 343-8256.)

SHORT LIST—**CHARLES ARNOLDI**, Cowles, 74 Grand St. 925-3500. Through Jan. 29. . . . **MICHAEL CRAIG-MARTIN**, Blum, 99 Wooster St. 343-0441. Through Jan. 29. . . . **ELISE ENGLER**, Bodell, 13 E. 7th St. 477-1820. Through Jan. 16. . . . **MARINA ROSENFELD**, Marcus, 578 Broadway. 226-3200. Through Jan. 22.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"ANCIENT HISTORY: PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE ANCIENT WORLD, 1851-1996"—Images of monuments, ruins, pictographs, and more, by such artists as Linda Connor, Lynn Davis, Louis de Clercq, Laura Gilpin, Richard Misrach, Andrew Moore, Felix Teynard, and Tseng Kwong Chi. Through Jan. 15. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

"EARTH FROM ABOVE"—A delightful series of large color photographs by the French aerial photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand, taken while flying over more than sixty countries. Through Jan. 29. (Science, Industry, and Business Library, New York Public Library, Madison Ave. at 34th St. 869-8089.)

"YNOT"—Photographs from the latest issue of *Blind Spot*, including works by William Wegman, John Baldessari, Shannon Taggart, Scott Irvine, and James Whitlow Delano. Through Jan. 29. (Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 25th St. 989-7600.)

GROUP SHOW—Recent works by Marianne Courville, Meghan Gerety, and Alexandra Rowley. Through Jan. 15. (Grimm, 505 W. 28th St. 564-7662. Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 7.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY—"Propaganda and Dreams: Photographing the 1930s in the USSR and the US." Through Feb. 13. (1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5; Fridays, 10 to 8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10 to 6.)

SHORT LIST—**JAYNE HINDS BIDAUT** and **LARRY GIANETTINO**, Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 627-4819. Both shows through Jan. 15. . . . **BRASSAÏ**, Houk, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 750-7070. Through Jan. 8. . . . **DAVID BUTOW**, SABA, 116 E. 16th St. 477-7722. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Jan. 6. . . . **ELAINE LUSTIG COHEN** and **DIDIER MASSARD**, Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747. Both shows through Jan. 15. . . . **JOHN COPLANS**, Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000. Through Jan. 15. . . . **JOHN DUGDALE**, Wessel and O'Connor, 242 W. 26th St. 242-8811. Open Sundays; through Jan. 9. . . . **ROLAND FISCHER**, Von Lintel & Nusser, 555 W. 25th St. 242-0599. Through Jan. 29. . . . **EDWARD GRAZDA**, Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 645-9444. Through Jan. 29. . . . **JANE GREER**, O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. 355-3330. Through Jan. 15. . . . **ANDREAS GURSKY**, Marks, 522 W. 22nd St. 243-0200. Through Jan. 15. . . . **HIRO**, Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999. Through Jan. 15. . . . **PETER MILLER** and **CATHERINE LEUTHOLD**, Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; both shows through Jan. 15. . . . **RUTH ORKIN**, Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through Jan. 22. . . . **RENÉ-JACQUES**, Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through Jan. 22. . . . **ANDREA ROBBINS AND MAX BECHER**, Tonkonow, 601 W. 26th St. 255-8450. Through Jan. 29. . . . **LOUIS STETTNER**, Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766. Through Jan. 15. . . . **DENNIS STOCK**, Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223. Through Jan. 22. . . . **MANABU YAMANAKA**, Stux, 529 W. 20th St. 352-1600. Through Jan. 22.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA—**TOSCA**, with Carol Vaness, Richard Leech, and James Morris; conducted by Daniel Oren. (Jan. 5 at 8 and Jan. 8 at 1:30.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY**, with Sylvie Valayre, Jane Bunnell, Vladimir Galouzine, and William Shimell; Marcello Viotti. (Jan. 6 at 8 and Jan. 10 at 7:30.) . . . John Harbison's **THE GREAT GATSBY**, with Dawn Upshaw, Susan Graham, Victoria Livengood, Jerry Hadley, Mark Baker, Dwayne Croft, and Richard Paul Fink; James Levine. (Jan. 7 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO**, with Youngok Shin, Ms. Livengood, Marcelo Alvarez, and Leo Nucci; Vladimir Jurowski. (Jan. 8 at 8.) . . . With Sumi Jo instead of Youngok Shin. (Jan. 11 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

AMATO OPERA COMPANY—Final performances of "Die Fledermaus." (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 228-8200. Jan. 7-8 at 7:30 and Jan. 9 at 2:30.)

"THE IMPRESARIO"—Mozart's humorous sendup of temperamental opera singers, performed in a concert version (in English) by four singers and an actor, accompanied by pianist Ilan Rechtman. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 718-885-2478. Jan. 9 at noon.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Kurt Masur conducting. This week and next, the violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter settles in for a residency that includes three separate orchestral programs at Lincoln Center and two recitals at Carnegie Hall, all focussing on twentieth-century repertoire. Jan. 6 and Jan. 8 at 8: Witold Lutoslawski composed his Partita for Violin and Piano and his "Chain 2" for Violin and Orchestra in 1984-85, and expanded the first into an orchestral version in 1988. That year and the next, he composed his Interlude for Orchestra to connect the two earlier works, thereby formulating what is essentially a three-movement, forty-five-minute violin concerto in which the hardworking soloist takes a well-deserved break in the middle section. In addition to the Lutoslawski triptych, Ms. Mutter is featured in Bernstein's "Serenade (After Plato's Symposium)." "Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture"—the well-known orchestral suite Richard Rodney Bennett assembled from Gershwin's opera—completes the program. . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 7:30 and Jan. 12 at 8: A suite from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet," in addition to the violin concertos of Berg and Sibelius. (875-5030.)

WILD GINGER PHILHARMONIC—David Goodman conducts Beethoven's "Coriolan" Overture, Shostakovich's Chamber Symphony (expanded for orchestra from his String Quartet No. 8), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 5. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Jan. 5 at 8. For information about tickets, call 879-5770.)

NEW YORK VIRTUOSO SINGERS—Harold Rosenbaum directs a retrospective of twentieth-century choral works by eleven American composers, including Ives's "Psalm 67," Copland's "In the Beginning," Perle's "The Chorus of Marvels," and Babbitt's "Three Cultivated Choruses." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 8 at 8.)

AMERICAN COMPOSERS ORCHESTRA—Dennis Russell Davies conducts John Cage's "Quartets" for String Orchestra, Amy Beach's Symphony No. 2 (the "Gaelic"), and premières of works by Muhal Richard Abrams and Daniel Roumain. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 9 at 3. . . . **NOTE:** On Jan. 6 at 8:30, Mr. Abrams, a composer and pianist, offers an extended improvisation in a recital that also includes two of his chamber works, at Joe's Pub, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St.; for information, call 239-6200.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800 PRODUCTIONS—The awkwardly named resident vocal ensemble of Music Before 1800 offers a program of Nativity-oriented Christmas and New Year's music by English and American composers, from the sixteenth century to the present. Louise Basbas directs. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Jan. 9 at 4.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY—Jens Nygaard conducts Handel's "Water Music," Alkan's "Concerto da Camera" (with pianist James Giles), Glazunov's "Idylle and Rêverie," and

Bruch's G-Minor Violin Concerto (featuring Dmitri Berlinsky). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. Jan. 10 at 2 and 7 and Jan. 11 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Juilliard Wind Ensemble—Mark Gould leads a suite from Wynton Marsalis's "A Fiddler's Tale," Eric Ewazen's "Shadow Catcher," William Schuman's "New England Triptych," and Steven Bryant's "Chester Leaps In." (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. Jan. 10 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

RECITALS

All-Bach—In the first New York recital of the "Bach year" (the semiquincentenary of his death), current and past winners of the Concert Artists Guild International Competition—violinist Joseph Lin, recorder player Aldo Abreu, cellist Semyon Fridman, and harpsichordist Elaine Comparone—perform solo and chamber works by the Leipzig master, including an excerpt from "A Musical Offering." (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. Jan. 5 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 333-5200.)

Gwendolyn Toth—A modern copy of an Anton Walter piano owned by Mozart serves as the vehicle for this performance of Mozart's A-Major Piano Sonata (K. 331), Vincenzo Maschek's "Variations on a Theme of Mozart," and Haydn's Sonata in E Minor (Hob. XVI:34). (St. Francis of Assisi Church, 135 W. 31st St. Jan. 6 at 1:15. No tickets necessary.)

Bargemusic—New York's only floating concert hall enters the new millennium with the ambitious mission of doubling its presentation schedule to four recitals a week—Thursday through Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Winter concerts are always inviting at Bargemusic, where a crackling fireplace adds to the warm-hearted atmosphere, and Sunday-afternoon performances are further enhanced by the spectacle of the sun setting over Manhattan, viewed through the window that backs the intimate stage. This week, Beethoven's complete Op. 18 String Quartets are played by violinists Paul Rosenthal and Mark Peskanov, violist Toby Hoffman, and cellist Nathaniel Rosen. Jan. 6 and Jan. 8 at 7:30: The Quartets No. 3, No. 1, and No. 2. . . . ¶ Jan. 7 at 7:30 and Jan. 9 at 4: The Quartets No. 5, No. 6, and No. 4. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061.)

Margaret Leng Tan—This Singapore-born, Juilliard-trained keyboard player is currently fascinated with the sonic possibilities of toy pianos, of which she has thirteen in her Brooklyn home. In this recital, she offers toy-piano interpretations of pieces by Cage, Glass, Beethoven, and others. (James Cohan gallery, 41 W. 57th St. Jan. 7 at 7. The concert is free, but for information about reservations, which are suggested, call 755-7171.)

Andrea Anderson—Performing piano sonatas by Beethoven (in F Minor, Op. 57) and Scriabin (his Fifth), in addition to Bach's "French" Suite No. 6 and Ravel's "Miroirs." (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Jan. 9 at 3.)

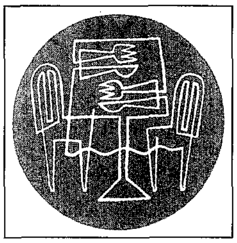
Evangeline Benedetti—The cellist, now in her thirty-second season as a member of the New York Philharmonic, is joined by pianist David Korevaar in performances of sonatas by Beethoven (his Third) and Mendelssohn (his Second), as well as Schumann's "Fünf Stücke im Volkston" and Hindemith's "Variations on 'A Frog He Went A-Courting.'" (West End Collegiate Church, West End Ave. at 77th St. Jan. 9 at 3:30. No tickets necessary.)

Joshua Bell and Frederic Chiu—The violinist and the pianist perform sonatas by Copland, Prokofiev (his First), and Ravel, in addition to Heifetz's transcription of Gershwin's Three Preludes; presented by the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Jan. 9 at 5.)

Stephan Genz—In his New York début recital, this German baritone sings lieder by Schumann and Wolf, with pianist Eric Schneider assisting. (Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Jan. 9 at 5.)

Richard Erickson—Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, well known for its weekly Vespers services with cantatas by Bach, is engaged in a four-year recital survey of the composer's complete organ music. The third season, which comprises four Sunday concerts this month, begins as Mr. Erickson, the church's music director, plays the G-Major Concerto (BWV 592) and the "Canonic Variations on 'Von Himmel Hoch,'" a towering masterpiece of Bach's last decade. (Central Park W. at 65th St. Jan. 9 at 5. No tickets necessary.)

TABLES FOR TWO



The Red Cat, 227 Tenth Ave., at 23rd St. (242-1122)—Other than a gallery opening, a performance at the Kitchen, or a transit strike, there aren't a lot of reasons that you'd end up on this lonely stretch at night. Nonetheless, the Red Cat is a hopping little joint that caters to an egalitarian crowd, which on one recent evening included a lone construction worker (a neighborhood regular) at the bar, tucking into a dish that's not on the menu, grilled venison with Kabocha squash; young members of the cell-phone set quaffing champagne and eating mussels at the front tables; and, back in the dining room, several older couples, the odd tourist or two, and a big, distinguished-looking family engaged in quiet conversation.

There is, thank God, no kitty theme here, but the place *is* vividly red: dishes of radishes with salt at the bar (as the French know, very nice with a drink before dinner), crimson wainscoting, and garnet-colored, highly lacquered dishes. The redness, though, is nicely offset by huge hanging candle lanterns from Morocco. The bartenders are happy to lay out a place at the bar for diners, if they don't object to smoke and chatter, but the dining room proper, where most of the waiters are warm yet mercifully unobtrusive, is far enough from the hubbub to be relaxing.

Order one of the house cocktails (don't ask what a cricket ball or red cat is, just have one) before sampling chef Jimmy Bradley's fresh bistro fare, then do so recklessly: a dish of grated zucchini with toasted almonds and Pecorino is tonic; the chicken-and-apple sausages are decadent. Most essential, though, as a starter or with an entrée, is a plate of Parmesan fries served with mustard aïoli. Right now, the main dishes are simple and wintry: Arctic char on crispy greens with toasted pumpkin seeds, wild mushrooms, and a truffle vinaigrette; slices of baby lamb with grilled red onions, sour cherries, and rapini; or shell steak with warm potato salad, fennel, and Cabernet sauce. To finish off the evening without the fluffy lemon pudding cake with raspberries would be a tragedy. (Open daily for dinner. Entrées $15-$26.)

Bernadette Hoke and Eric Birk—Performing music for piano four-hands, including Fauré's "Dolly," Corigliano's "Gazebo Dances," and several of Dvořák's "Slavonic Dances." (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. Jan. 10 at noon. Admission by contribution.)

American Composers Summit—Concert presenters, artist managers, and other players in the classical-music industry are gathered in New York this week for a professional convention. One offshoot, open to the public for a nominal charge, is a three-hour showcase of works by composers Derek Bermel, Sebastian Currier, George Crumb, Augusta Read Thomas, and John Musto (among others), all of whom will attend. The performers include pianists Alan Feinberg and Christopher Taylor, guitarist David Starobin, the Flux String Quartet, and the New York Festival of Song. (Miller Theatre, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. Jan. 10 at 4. Tickets at the door.)

Anne-Sophie Mutter—As part of her two-week residency in New York (which includes three separate programs with the New York Philharmonic), Ms. Mutter offers a pair of recitals, with pianist Lambert Orkis, that survey the twentieth-century solo and chamber repertoire for violin. The first comprises sonatas by Respighi and Bartók (his Second), Webern's Four Pieces (Op. 7), Crumb's Four Nocturnes ("Nightmusic II"), and Ravel's "Tzigane." (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 10 at 7:30. The second recital takes place on Jan. 17.)

Trefoil—This newly formed early-music trio comprises soprano Marcia Young and countertenors Mark Rimple and Drew Minter, all of whom also play medieval plucked-string instruments. In this concert, the group performs rhythmically complex pieces from the Ars Subtilior school of the late fourteenth century, including works by Johannes Ciconia and Jacob de Senleches. (St. Luke In-the-Fields, 487 Hudson St., at Grove St. 633-2167. Jan. 11 at 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

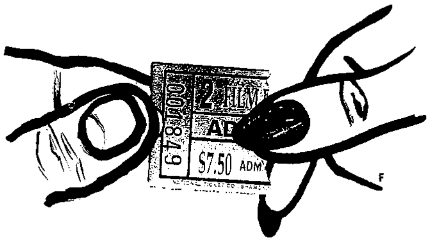
Avast Ye Winter Blues!—The ninetieth New York National Boat Show brings fishing seminars, casting contests, Skipper the friendly dolphin, and more than a thousand cabin cruisers, fishing skiffs, runabouts, and other pleasure craft to town—it's an excuse to slip on your Docksides in January without springing for airfare. (Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, Eleventh Ave. between 34th and 39th Sts. Jan. 8, from 10 to 9, Jan. 9, from 11 to 6, and Jan. 10-11, from 1 to 9. Through Jan. 16. For more information, call 888-322-9922.)

Pickin' 'n' Grinnin'—Kiss guitarists Paul Stanley and Ace Frehley join Les Paul, inventor of the solid-body electric guitar, at the New York Custom Guitar Show. In addition to the axmen, more than three thousand guitars will be on display, along with instruments signed and used by such players as Eric Clapton, John Mellencamp, Chet Atkins, and Jeff Beck. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 564-4882. Jan. 9, from noon to 7:30.)

Readings—Jan. 10 at 8:15: By poets Richard Howard and William Logan. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.) . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 7: By Ed McBain, from his latest novel, "The Last Dance." (Barnes & Noble, Broadway at 66th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talk—Jan. 11 at 6:45: Roderick Blackburn, a historian of seventeenth-century decorative arts, presents an illustrated lecture on New York City's Dutch roots. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. 873-3400.)

Tour—Jan. 9 at 1:30: Senior guide Thomas Fedorek explores the interior of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. For reservations, call 932-7347.)



THE MOVIES

OPENING

If You Only Understood—A documentary about a Cuban film director who is searching for a black woman dancer to star in his next project. Directed by Rolando Díaz. In Spanish. Opening Jan. 7. (Walter Reade Theatre.)

Life Is to Whistle—Fernando Pérez directs this chronicle of three Cubans—a dancer, a hospice worker, and a drummer—whose lives intersect on the feast of Santa Bárbara (a.k.a. the African god Chango, the ruler of destinies). In Spanish. Opening Jan. 7. (Walter Reade Theatre.)

Trans—A fifteen-year-old juvenile delinquent escapes from his detention center and searches for a new life in rural Florida. With Ryan Daugherty. Written and directed by Julian Goldberger. Opening Jan. 7. (Screening Room.)

FILM NOTES

(If a movie has been reviewed recently in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given.)

Angela's Ashes—It's not a dud, exactly—it has some flavor and an impressively dank, rain-soaked pallor—but this Alan Parker adaptation of Frank McCourt's memoir doesn't dramatize the material with much force. Parker keeps moving ahead through McCourt's boyhood in Limerick (he wants to get his hero to America); he doesn't develop anything in depth, so the stories of poverty and desperate resourcefulness have a thin, almost generic feeling of Irish bitterness. The three young actors (Joe Breen, Ciaran Owens, and Michael Legge) who play Frank at different phases of his life all have wonderful faces, but Emily Watson and Robert Carlyle, as McCourt's suffering mom and ne'er-do-well father, are trapped by static roles.—*David Denby* (Coronet Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

Anna and the King—To remake "The King and I" without the music is a risky enterprise, like leaving the bosoms out of a Russ Meyer flick. But Andy Tennant has stuck gamely to a tough job and made a moody, respectable epic that would have been even better if he had shortened it by three-quarters of an hour. Jodie Foster, doing her scary-intelligence number, plays the widowed Anna; Chow-Yun Fat, forsaking the firepower of his action movies for a killer smile, plays King Mongkut, who doesn't want some smart-ass Westerner telling him how to run the country or why he shouldn't remove the heads of those delinquent citizens who fall in love. In fact, the moral and political issues feel cloudy and unresolved; what stays with you is the elegant comedy of a romance that never quite comes to pass.—*Anthony Lane* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (Chelsea Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, Village East Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Any Given Sunday—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Murray Hill Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Cider House Rules—Lasse Hallström's new picture, adapted by John Irving from his own novel, begins at a snowbound orphanage in Maine, where Dr. Larch (Michael Caine) tends to the bodies and souls of the unwanted, even extending his skills to an illegal abortion practice. His protégé is Homer Wells (Tobey Maguire), who is set to follow in Larch's footsteps until those of Candy (Charlize Theron) appear. Homer departs for the wide world, where he learns about apples and sex, in that order. The orphan scenes have an imaginative solidity that fades as the film proceeds, and you can't work out whether the gruelling social issues, like incest and abortion, are the subject of the movie or simply ballast. As apple movies go, this one lacks a core.—*A.L.* (12/13/99) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

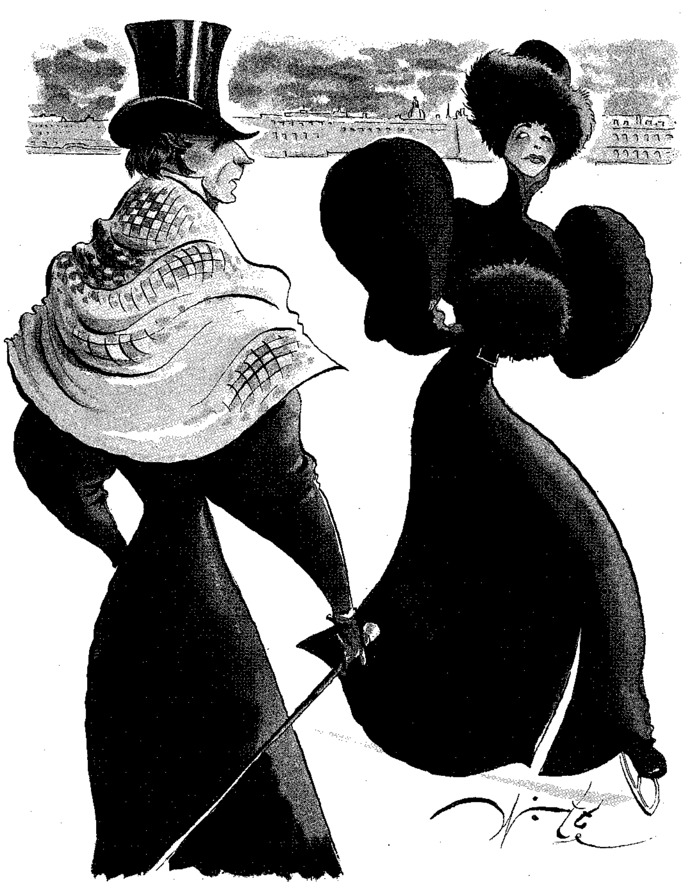
Cradle Will Rock—In 1937, Orson Welles and John Houseman barely succeeded in putting on Marc Blitzstein's "The Cradle Will Rock," a musical drama about prostitutes, unions, and a lot of other things that musicals were never meant to mention. Tim Robbins's picture tells the interlocking stories of that supercharged age. Houseman (Cary Elwes) and Welles (Angus Macfadyen) are merely part of the procession; we also get the saga of Nelson Rockefeller (John Cusack) paying Diego Rivera (Ruben Blades) to paint a giant mural and then having it destroyed. As if in homage to that lost work, Robbins moves gaily and with high technical fluency from penniless actors (John Turturro and Emily Watson) to sincere socialites like Countess La Grange (Vanessa Redgrave) and a ravishing Fascist named Margherita Sarfatti (Susan Sarandon). With Hank Azaria as Blitzstein, and—best of all—Cherry Jones as Hallie Flanagan, the smiling mainstay of the Federal Theatre in its darkest hour.—*A.L.* (12/13/99) (Angelika Film Center, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, and Lincoln Square.)

The Green Mile—Is there such a thing as commercial pedantry? If there is, this movie embodies it. Frank Darabont's adaptation of Stephen King's 1996 serial novel is a three-hour-and-eight-minute religious allegory about a black convict (Michael Clarke Duncan), a white prison guard (Tom Hanks), and a mouse. The convict is meant to be Jesus Christ, and the mouse, which gets crushed and then reborn, is meant to represent survival—or perhaps Life Itself. Darabont lays out his meagre death-row story with lethal thoroughness, and the miracles arrive on schedule. The movie blinds itself with the grandiosity of its illusions. On the one hand, it preaches love; on the other, it tries to excite the audience with the convulsed body and flaming head of a man strapped into an electric chair. By the end, the sanctimonious hypocrisy is all but unbearable.—*D.D.* (12/20/99) (Astor Plaza, Chelsea West, Coronet Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

The Hurricane—Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Beekman, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, and Union Square.)

It Happened One Night (1934)—No one has ever fully explained what gives this basically slight romantic comedy its particular—and enormous—charm. It's no more than the story of a runaway heiress (Claudette Colbert) and a fired newspaperman (Clark Gable) who meet on a long-distance night bus and fall in love. Yet the film (which neither of its stars wanted to appear in) caught on with the public and made audiences happy in a way that only a few films in each era do; in the mid-thirties, the Colbert and the Gable of this film became Americans' idealized view of themselves—breezy, likable, sexy, gallant, and maybe just a little harebrained. (It was the "Annie Hall" of its day—before the invention of anxiety.) Frank Capra directed. —*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Jan. 7-8.)

Magnolia—In Paul Thomas Anderson's new movie, the characters break down, fall apart, and denounce themselves and others. "Magnolia" consists of multiple vignettes set in the San Fernando Valley, but since there's no common theme, the picture becomes a kind of mad crackup derby. Much of the material is earnest Arthur Miller-type stuff about how we can't escape the past, we can't escape the evil we've done, we all need to be truthful with one another, and so on. The ideas are banal, but Anderson ("Boogie Nights") plays each sequence in real time and cuts among them with remarkable fluency, and the actors have some tremendous arialike moments—especially Julianne Moore as an adulterous young wife, John C. Reilly as an angelic cop looking for love, and Tom Cruise as some sort of sex guru who hosts a cable-TV show called "Seduce and Destroy." With Jason Robards, Philip Seymour Hoffman, and William H. Macy.—*D.D.* (12/20/99) (Cinema I, Lincoln Square, Union Square.)



A Russian aristocrat (Ralph Fiennes) spurns the love of a country beauty (Liv Tyler) in "Onegin," an adaptation of Pushkin's novel.

MICHAEL WITTE

Man on the Moon—Jim Carrey, as the surrealist comic Andy Kaufman, who died in 1984, is more volatile than the actual Kaufman—bigger, more threatening, more thoroughly lost in madness. He captures Kaufman's infantile grandiosity, the taunting ironic schmuckiness that dared anyone to take offense. Unfortunately, the moviemakers' intention is not to illuminate Kaufman but to enshrine him as a pure performer and beautiful nut case. This Kaufman is exactly the same offstage and on. He's all surface and tricks, all wild-monkey craziness, and he shatters every reality but his own. We are too intimidated to ask such obvious questions as, Is he calculating and shrewd or is he just unconscious—a semi-psychotic set loose in the media? Our desire to understand him is recast as some sort of existential weakness; the movie turns into an exercise in one-upmanship. With Paul Giamatti, Danny DeVito, and Courtney Love. Written by Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski.—*D.D.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII.)

Snow Falling on Cedars—Set in the Pacific Northwest in 1950, Scott Hicks's movie (his first since "Shine") confronts all the big issues: love, death, memory, war, forgiveness, racial hatred, and the irresistible urge welling from the heart of primitive man—to flick an entire bagful of M&M's at a movie screen. The story turns on the demise of a local fisherman, who died of either family vengeance or, more likely, boredom. His friend Kazuo (Rick Yune), a respected member of the local Japanese-American community, is accused of murder. Ethan Hawke stars as a young reporter covering the case; the attorneys are played by James Rebhorn and Max Von Sydow, who steals the picture as a way of passing the time. Given the additional presence of James Cromwell and Sam Shepard, it should have been impossible for the director to screw up; somehow, Hicks pulls it off. The film is so entombed in gloom and crummy weather, so rich in meaningless detail, that by the end you don't particularly care who whacked the poor victim, let alone why; on the other hand, under the weight of all that snow, you get a pretty good idea of what it feels like to be a cedar.—*A.L.* (Lincoln Square.)

Sweet and Lowdown—Sean Penn, in cream-colored suits and matching hat, a cigarette dangling from his lips, gives one of the best performances ever seen in a Woody Allen film. He plays Emmet Ray, the notorious (and made-up) jazz guitarist from the thirties, a great artist who was also a worm and a loser. Emmet handles his instrument almost as well as his idol Django Reinhardt, but he's the victim of his own neuroses and obsessions. His not knowing himself at all is turned into a joke, but it's also played for pathos—incomprehension is Emmet's soulfulness, mysteriously linked to his elegant playing. With the English actress Samantha Morton, hatted and crumpet-faced, her body hidden in a shapeless dress, as the mute girl who falls for Emmet. The golden-hued cinematography is by Zhao Fei. The contemporary guitarists Howard Alden and Bucky Pizzarelli do the playing. In all, one of Allen's finest achievements.—*D.D.* (12/6/99) (Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Union Square.)

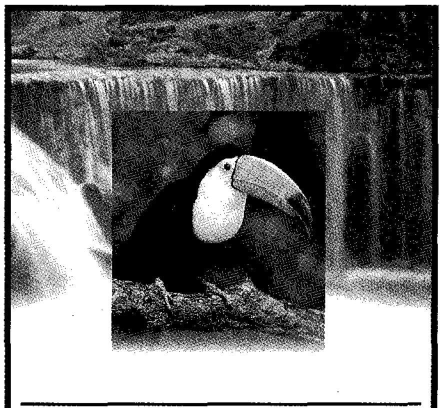
The Talented Mr. Ripley—For his first outing since "The English Patient," the writer and director Anthony Minghella has returned to the roasted light of Italy; this is a less passionate project—or, rather, the passions are directed toward less salubrious ends. The source is Patricia Highsmith's spooky, misanthropic novel of 1955; Matt Damon plays Tom Ripley, her murderous hero, although he probably lacks the quicksilver elusiveness that the role demands. He is outshone by Jude Law, whose violent disappearance, halfway through the picture, is a grievous wound. Law is sunny, slippery, and pansexual; he might have made a better Ripley himself. In the female roles, Gwyneth Paltrow struggles to find anything much in the stony Marge, whom Highsmith so loftily scorned; more rewarding is the dreamy Cate Blanchett as an heiress named Meredith Logue—a part invented by Minghella. Her fine features are like a flawless period detail in themselves. The film feels warm but unsettled, as if hinting at approaching storms; the score, too, flits from lugubrious to manic. With Philip Seymour Hoffman, perfectly cast once again, this time as another of Tom's victims.—*A.L.* (12/27/99-1/3/00) (East 85th Street, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia I and II, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

Titus—Shakespeare's first, and most violent, tragedy, "Titus Andronicus," lacks the wit that leavens the gore of his later works. The play concerns a double-revenge plot set in motion when the Roman general Titus sacrifices the eldest son of Tamora, Queen of the Goths. Julie Taymor, making her film directorial début, softens the edges by mixing modern and ancient elements, interrupting the action with surreal allegorical montages, and introducing a new character, Young Lucius (Osheen Jones), a twentieth-century boy who is meant to be a stand-in for the audience, but mostly looks out of place. Before Titus (Anthony Hopkins) gets around to serving his famous sons-of-the-queen-filled pie, Taymor has shown us ritual sacrifice, rape, murder, torture, and several dismemberments. It's all very beautiful. Anthony Hopkins alone appears comfortable with Elizabethan English; Jessica Lange has a wonderful, focussed presence as Queen Tamora; and Alan Cumming's smirk is perfect for his role as the effeminate boy emperor, Saturninus. But in her desire to make "Titus" relevant, Taymor presents the play's symbolism with all the subtlety of a knife to the gut—and after you've endured the film's countless stylized thrusts, the only sane response is laughter.—*Michael Agger* (Union Square.)

Topsy-Turvy—Mike Leigh's brilliant re-creation of the most famous partnership in the British theatre—the collaboration of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan in the glory era of imperial rule. There are elements here of a traditional bio-pic—failure, triumph, intimations of immortality—but none of the stodginess and self-congratulation that usually plague the form. Sullivan (Allan Corduner), a libertine who nevertheless had serious pretensions as a composer, and Gilbert (Jim Broadbent), formal, irascible, and asexual, but a great theatrical pro, are so dissimilar in temperament that they can hardly bear each other's company. Leigh suggests that the combination of sentimental languor and incisiveness produced the art of "The Mikado," whose preparation and first performance take up the second half of the movie. The authentic period stage lighting produces a glow on the painted faces; the fragile beauty of Sullivan's tunes is piercing when they are played, as they are here, at slower tempos than we are used to hearing. In all, one of the greatest movies about the theatre. With Lesley Manville, Timothy Spall, Ron Cook, and Wendy Nottingham.—*D.D.* (Paris.)

ALSO PLAYING

All About My Mother (11/22/99): Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, and Eastside Playhouse. . . . **American Beauty** (9/20/99): First & 62nd Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and State. . . . **American Movie:** Film Forum. . . . **Being John Malkovich** (11/22/99): BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 62nd & Broadway, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **Bicentennial Man:** Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema I, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Kips Bay Theatre, 42nd Street E Walk, Union Square, and Waverly. . . . **Boys Don't Cry** (10/18-25/99): Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Quad Cinema, Union Square, and Waverly. . . .



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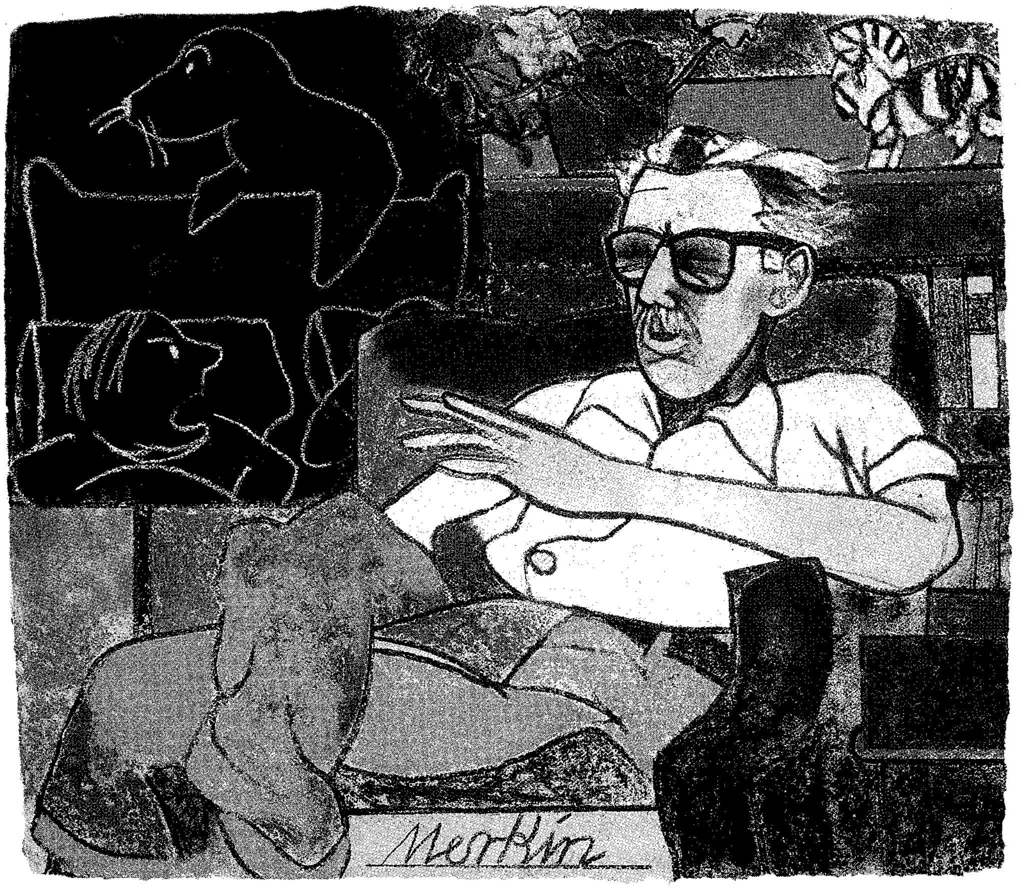

THURBER'S CARNIVAL:

James Thurber, despite the popular success he achieved in his lifetime, died embittered by his failure to be recognized as a "serious artist." His friend and mentor, E. B. (Andy) White, who viewed these matters with an ironic detachment unavailable to Thurber, once wrote that society "decorates its serious artists with laurel, and its wags with Brussels sprouts." "James Thurber: The Life and Hard Times," written and produced by Adam Van Doren for PBS (it premières Jan. 6), illuminates the artist's career—small-town newspaperman to New Yorker superstar to international celebrity—with well-chosen selections from the work itself. Bolstered by insightful comments from, among others, John Updike and Fran Lebowitz, the hour provides a strong rebuttal to Thurber's own mocking self-assessment that he was "nothing but a God-damned humorist."—Lee Lorenz

RICHARD MERKIN

DEUCE BIGALOW: MALE GIGOLO: Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **DOGMA** (11/15/99): East 85th Street, Kips Bay Theatre, and Union Square. . . . **THE EMPEROR AND THE ASSASSIN:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **THE END OF THE AFFAIR** (12/6/99): BAM Rose Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **FLAWLESS:** 19th Street East 6 and State. . . . **42 UP:** Cinema Village. . . . **GALAXY QUEST:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Union Square. . . . **GIRL, INTERRUPTED:** Lincoln Square and Union Square. . . . **THE INSIDER** (11/8/99): Cinema 3rd Avenue, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, State, and Union Square. . . . **LIBERTY HEIGHTS** (11/29/99): First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Village East Cinemas, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **MANSFIELD PARK** (11/29/99): Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and First & 62nd Cinemas. . . . **MR. DEATH:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. . . . **ONEGIN:** Cinema Village and 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **ROSETTA** (11/8/99): Quad Cinema. . . . **SLEEPY HOLLOW** (11/22/99): Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, State, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **STUART LITTLE:** Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square. . . . **THE THIRD MIRACLE:** Quad Cinema. . . . **TOY STORY 2:** Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **TUMBLEWEEDS:** First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square. . . . **THE WAR ZONE:** Union Square. . . . **THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH** (11/29/99): Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Mental Hygiene: Social Guidance Films 1945-1970." A retrospective of the short instructive films shown in school classrooms throughout the postwar era. Guest curator and historian Ken Smith introduces each collection. Jan. 8 at 2: "Mental Hygiene: An Introduction". . . . Jan. 8 at 4: "Early Efforts". . . . Jan. 9 at 2: "The Dark Side". . . . Jan. 9 at 4: "Girls Only". . . . ¶ Jan. 8-9 at 6:30: "A Moment of Innocence" (1996, Mohsen Mahkmalbaf; in Persian).

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—A showcase of films released by Kino International. Jan. 6-7 at 7: "The Tin Drum" (1979, Volker Schlondorff; in German). . . . Jan. 6 at 9:45: "Visions of Light" (1992, Arnold Glassman, Todd McCarthy, and Stuart Samuels). . . . Jan. 7 at 9:45: "Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French). . . . Jan. 8 at 3: "The Blue Kite" (1993, Tian Zhuangzhuang; in Mandarin). . . . Jan. 8 at 6: "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Leni Riefenstahl" (1993, Ray Müller; in German). . . . Jan. 8 at 9:30 and Jan. 9 at 10: "Black Orpheus" (1958, Marcel Camus; in French). . . . Jan. 9 at 2: "Daughters of the Dust" (1991, Julie Dash). . . . Jan. 9 at 4:30: "Andrei Roublev" (1966, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian). . . . Jan. 9 at 8: "Rashomon" (1951, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese). . . . Jan. 10 at 7: "Dersu Uzala" (1975, Kurosawa; in Japanese). . . . Jan. 10 at 9:30: "Streets of Shame" (1956, Kenji Mizoguchi; in Japanese). . . . Jan. 11 at 7: "Wild Strawberries" (1957, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). . . . Jan. 11 at 9: "Caravaggio" (1986, Derek Jarman).

BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770)—Jan. 5 at 6 and 9: "The Underground Orchestra" (1998, Heddy Honigmann). As part of the Cinemachat program, critic Elliott Stein leads a discussion of the film after the six o'clock screening. . . . ¶ A series of films with Harvey Keitel. Jan. 6 at 6 and 9: "Reservoir Dogs" (1992, Quentin Tarantino). . . . ¶ A tribute to Sergio Leone, popularizer of the spaghetti Western. Jan 7 at 6 and 9: "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" (1966). . . . ¶ The films of Charles Laughton. Jan. 8 at 3, 6, and 9: "Hobson's Choice" (1954, David Lean). . . . Jan. 9 at 3, 6, and 9: "Witness for the Prosecution" (1957, Billy Wilder). . . . ¶ A Frank Capra retrospective. Jan. 10 at 6 and 9: "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington" (1939). . . . ¶ Jan. 11 at 6 and 9: "Fallen Angels" (1995, Wong Kar-Wai).

Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—A program of films celebrating Columbia Pictures' seventy-fifth anniversary. Jan. 5-6: "Dr. Strangelove" (1964, Stanley Kubrick). . . . ¶ A retrospective of films written by Robert Riskin. Jan. 7-8: "Mr. Deeds Goes to Town" (1936, Frank Capra) and "It Happened One Night" (†). . . . Jan. 9: "Broadway Bill" (1934, Capra) and "The Whole Town's Talking" (1935, John Ford). . . . Jan. 10: "When You're in Love" (1937, Robert Riskin) and "The Big Timer" (1932, Edward Buzzell). . . . Jan. 11: "Shopworn" (1932, Nicholas Grinde) and "Virtue" (1932, Buzzell).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 11 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Too Beautiful for You" (1989, Bertrand Blier; in French).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—New documentaries. Jan. 6 at 6 and Jan. 7 at 3: "Standing Tall" (1999, Donald Blank). . . . ¶ Through April 2000: A program of silent films, 1893 to 1928, from the museum's collection.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Jan. 30: "Andy's Funhouse: The Andy Kaufman Special" (1979). (Tuesdays and Wednesdays at 1, Thursdays at 6, Fridays at 7, and Saturdays and Sundays at 1). . . . ¶ Through Feb. 13: "Super Bowl: Super Showcase for Commercials." Frank Gifford narrates the ascendance of television's premier venue for new advertisements.

The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (332-2100)—Jan. 5-6: "Close-Up" (1990, Abbas Kiarostami; in Persian). . . . ¶ A Kirk Douglas retrospective. Jan. 8-9 at 12 P.M.: "Spartacus" (1960, Stanley Kubrick). . . . Jan. 8-9 at 3:35: "Paths of Glory" (1957, Kubrick). . . . ¶ Two films by director Frank Henenlotter, who will be present at the screenings. Jan. 7 at 12 A.M.: "Basket Case" (1981). . . . Jan. 8 at 12 A.M.: "Brain Damage" (1987). . . . ¶ Classic films shown at brunch time. Jan. 8 at 1:30: "The Wizard of Oz" (1939, Victor Fleming). . . . Jan. 9 at 1:30: "Breakfast at Tiffany's" (1961, Blake Edwards).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A series of films that present visions of the future. Jan. 5: "A Boy and His Dog" (1975, L. Q. Jones), "Dark Star" (1971, John Carpenter), and "The Impossible Voyage" (1904, George Méliès; in French). . . . Jan. 6: "La Jetée" (1962, Chris Marker; in French), "A Trip to the Moon" (1902, Méliès; in French) and "Stalker" (1979, Andrei Tarkovsky; in Russian).

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077).
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-623-2770).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

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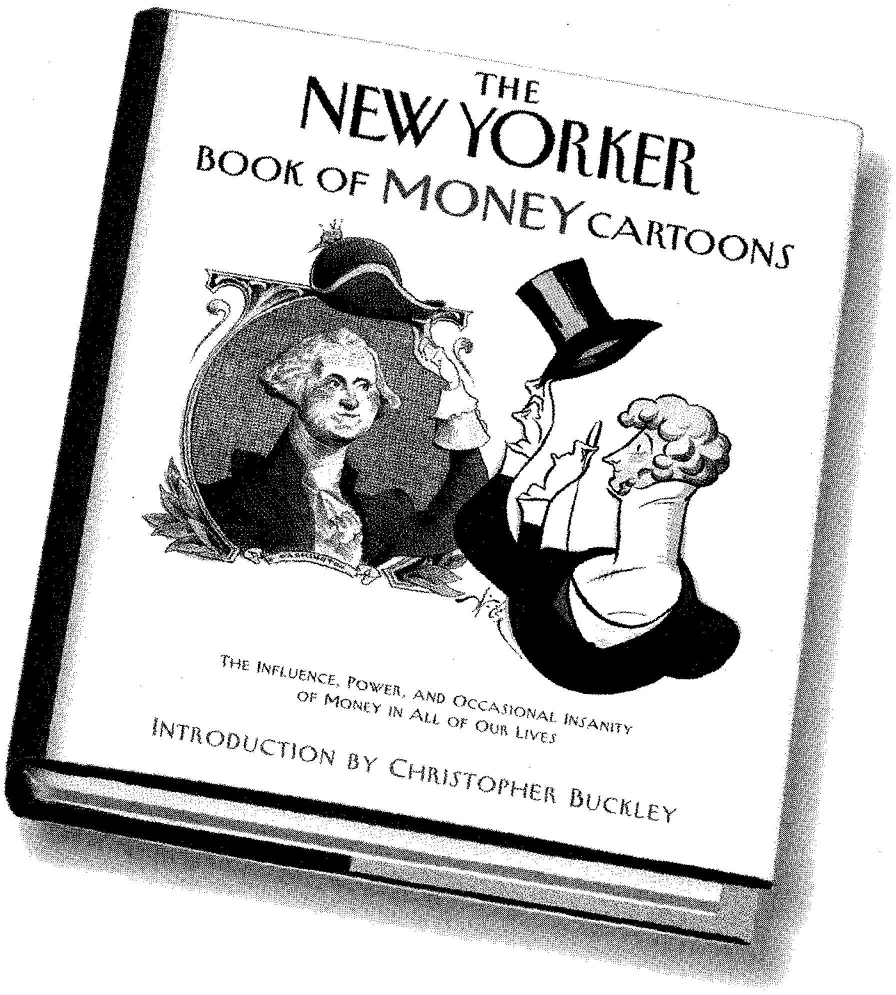
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THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT

A long time coming.

FOR the past quarter century, people have insisted that an impatient America was moving toward an ever-shorter collective attention span and to entertainments cynically designed for it. Recently, best-selling books, like James Gleick's "Faster," have mourned the fragmentation of our world, while crowds eager to understand our ever-escalating consciousness flock to the "Story of Time" exhibition at the Royal Observatory, in Greenwich. And yet what we really seem to have achieved is a reconfiguration of time, to the point that everything appears to be slowing down again. Virtue now attaches itself to length as wit once attached itself to concision.

C-SPAN has earned a reputation for absolute probity by showing political events in their entirety. Twenty-five-year-old Julia Butterfly Hill just climbed down from an ancient redwood after sitting in it for *two years* to insure that it would not be turned into lawn furniture. The Vice-President's proposal that issue-exhausting debates replace thirty-second ads may not have been entirely sincere, but it did carry the implication that people—some people, anyway—want to watch issue-exhausting debates. For Christmas dinner, one of the "best American recipes of 1999" suggested a roast duck that took seven hours to reach the table.

Attention-surplus syndrome has come to culture, too. The Christmas movies—"The Green Mile," "Magnolia," "Topsy-Turvy," "Man on the Moon"—all seem to be running three hours, or close to it. The new CD from tiny Fiona Apple bears a ninety-word title. Long is the new chic; length is the new brevity. Books are getting longer, too. There were all those big volumes on the American Century that seemed to demand another hundred years to read them, an elephantine biography of Dutch Reagan, and Neal Stephenson's "Cryptonomicon," a best-seller at nine hundred and eighteen pages. Few thrillers can make it unless they are large, cubical, and usable later as door stops.

It would all seem to be part of the strange elongation of our days. Of the futuristic stuff that was supposed to have happened by now—the personal rocket-pack, the two-way wrist radio—the only thing that really has materialized is the twenty-four-hour day. Watch Chaplin's "Modern Times" and you'll notice that the least modern thing about his factory is the sense of a rigorous schedule, of the breaking up of time—the whistles announcing the morning shift, lunch, tea breaks, and quitting time. Now the boss is still in his office at midnight, and flextime employees dance in and out at all hours. Workplaces are equipped with gyms, kitchens, salons, stores, banks, therapists, and beds. Stock trading doesn't stop at five but creeps east with the dawn, and the poor Europeans in the branch offices can never go home.

No one has yet shown that more is accomplished in this way, that more is being made or built, but the moreness is in itself the point. *Time*, after all, has chosen as person of the year Amazon's Jeff Bezos, a tycoon who has made the making of money *something that may happen someday*. "Business at the speed of thought," perhaps, but we're willing to look to the horizon for it to turn a profit. We embrace what some bullish forecasters have dubbed "the long boom." We buy because we should have bought General Motors in 1916.

So perhaps length is the tribute that entertainment pays to industry. Only a three-hour movie or an eight-hundred-page book seems worth interrupting the endless day for. Long is serious. Long is heavy. Long is *long*. Of all the new phrases that technology has sneaked into the language, "real time" is undoubtedly the oddest; it suggests that there is some other kind. But perhaps there is another, unreal form of time, and we were all living in it. Unreal time is Chaplin's time, industrial time, Enlightenment time—time mastered, dominated, broken up into bits. Perhaps by real time we mean not only instant time—you're communicating with me as I communicate with you, no delays between us—but also the constant flow that is time as it really is.

Surely the next big thing will be the interminable movie, the endless

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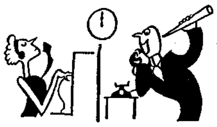
ILLUSTRATION BY LAURENT CILLUFFO

novel, the perpetual television show, art forms that will allow you to wander in and out, return to your office at three in the morning to buy and sell, to manipulate symbols for profit, and then pop back into the theatre to see someone else manipulate them for fun. Art and life braided together in a permanent now. The real millennium will have arrived when time in art comes, at long, long last, to exactly mirror time in life, when it is the viewer, and not the spectacle, who fades out first, clutching his heart and gasping, as he slumps for eternity in his seat, "The End." —Adam Gopnik

TABLE TALK

A restaurant employee's revenge.



Mark Setlock, who plays a swamped restaurant reservationist in the one-man show "Fully Committed," made a phone call the other day to David Bouley's (pronounced "Boo-layz") latest downtown dining temple, Danube (pronounced "Da-nyoob"), that was something of a payback. The play, which is currently running at the Cherry Lane Theatre, is based in part on Setlock's dues-paying days, working the phones in the basement—also known as the Reservations Department—of the now defunct Bouley, where consciously with-it diners went before Balthazar existed. In a windowless room one story below Duane Street, Setlock fielded an endless onslaught of calls from people phoning months in advance for a table, as well as calls from less organized patrons, who were prone to whine, beg, and even offer bribes for a table that week.

"It wasn't a fun job," Setlock said one recent afternoon, sipping tea at the Metro Diner, at Broadway and 100th Street. The actor looked boyish in a blue hooded sweatshirt, wire-frame glasses, and a baseball cap. "I had to tell people no all day," he said. Then he confessed that, when the job got boring, he took some comfort in flipping through Zagat's for the phone numbers of fellow-reservationists, whom he would then antagonize. "I'd use the crazy lines I'd heard on them." An example? "A queen once called and wanted her own toilet and bathroom attendant. We said we'd work on it, and then some diplomatic duty or something came up, so she couldn't make it," Setlock recalled. "A television star once asked if I would snip the stamens off all the flowers in the dining room, because his wife was allergic to pollen." Hence the glee in Setlock's voice when he agreed to call up Danube and try to reserve a table for Saturday night.

"I'll put them through some loops," he said, lowering his voice just enough to suggest conspiracy.

The call went as follows:

Reservationist (*with slight accent*): Good evening, Danube. How may I help you?

Setlock: Whoa! I got through—you guys are popular! Can I make a reservation?

Reservationist: When would you like it?

Setlock: I heard this is the hot new place in New York, and I'm going to be there in the next couple days. Is it German food?

Reservationist: Austrian.

Setlock: Austrian? What, exactly, is that?

Reservationist: It's Austro-Hungarian.

Setlock: Do you have sauerkraut, stuff like that?

Reservationist: No. Well, it's Austro-Hungarian made in the chef's style.

Setlock: Can you just give me a little example of something on the menu?

Reservationist: O.K. Let's see. (*Pause*) We have braised tender beef cheeks, which looks good. I saw it. I didn't taste it. It looks really good.

Setlock: Beef cheeks?

Reservationist: Beef cheeks, yes—in a wine sauce, with garlic-chive spaetzle and carrots.

Setlock: Wow, I've never had a beef cheek before!

Reservationist: Can you hold one moment? (*Five-second silence*) Hello?

Setlock: I was expecting some music! I didn't hear any. So what do you think—for a dinner for two, how much is it going to cost me?

Reservationist: About a hundred per person.

Setlock: That's not as bad as I thought! . . . All right, all right. I think my reservation has already been made by my partner, who's going to be dining with me, for this Saturday, at nine-thirty. It should be under Langley.

Reservationist: O.K. One moment, please.

Setlock: Did you find it, Ma'am?

Reservationist: I don't see it.

Setlock: Maybe she made it under . . . What other names do you have?

Reservationist: I have a lot of names.

Setlock: For parties of two, at nine-thirty?

Reservationist: Yes.

Setlock: Oh, dear.

Reservationist: It's not Scooby, is it? Scooby, Brian.

Setlock: Scooby? No, it's not Scooby. Do you have anything that night if it's not there?

Reservationist: No, I don't.

Setlock: You don't have anything that night?

Reservationist: No. Not until, I'd say, eleven o'clock.

Setlock: What about Sunday?

Reservationist: On Sunday? (*Pause*) Oh, we're not open on Sunday.

Setlock: I guess you don't have anything, then. Well, you're booked, huh? You're booked.

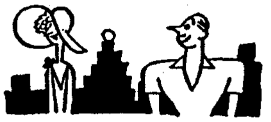
Reservationist (*pause*): Yes.

"You see!" Setlock said, once he had hung up. "They never say 'booked'! They think it's kind of lowbrow. There are ways of getting around it. It's O.K. to say, 'We don't have anything' or 'There's nothing available,' just so long as you don't say the word 'booked.' "

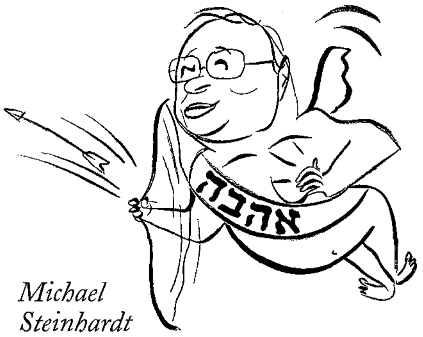
At Bouley, he went on, haute code for "Sorry, pal, no can do" was "fully committed." "But usually we would end up having to say 'booked,' anyway, because people would always say, 'Fully what?' " —Nicole LaPorte

HAPPILY EVER AFTER DEPT.

A place for singles to meet without the aid of Jewish mothers.



It is immediately apparent, when you enter Makor, the new Jewish cultural center on West Sixty-seventh Street, that it is no bagel-with-a-schmear type of place. On the ground floor of the six-story town house it occupies is a sleek, dimly lit bar, and, next to it, a low-ceilinged performance space featuring jazz quartets, klezmer bands, and other acts co-produced by that bastion of downtown cool the Knitting Factory. On the second floor is an art gallery and a seventy-two-seat screening room. Upstairs are seminar rooms offering evening courses like "Eden in Your Bedroom," "The Jewish Buddha Within," "Drop-In Kabbalah" (eight dollars a session), and "Emotional Healing Through the Chakras."



Michael Steinhardt

Unlike the 92nd Street Y, which is Jewish but not hip, or the Angelika Film Center, which is hip but not Jewish, Makor (Hebrew for "source") is trying to accomplish the tricky task of being Jewish *and* hip. Although the center can withstand rabbinic inspection (all the food is kosher), it does not advertise this fact. The idea is to entice secular Jews into a cosmopolitan environment, where, cocktail in hand, they can explore their faith and, it's hoped, deepen their ties to it.

But Makor's agenda goes beyond spreading Torah awareness. With its target demographic of Jews in their twenties and thirties, and its frisky-sounding calendar of activities—late-night "Joy of Dessert" gatherings, talks by the author of "Kosher Sex," Rabbi Shmuley Boteach—Makor is the latest tool in the age-old battle against assimilation, intermarriage, and low birth rates among American Jews. As Rabbi Andrew Bachman, the director of the Bronfman Center Hillel, at New York University, puts it, "It's a place for Jews to meet other Jews, get married, screw, and have Jewish kids."

The directors of Makor, after conducting extensive focus-group research, have decided that they'll attract more Jewish singles if they keep the matchmaking agenda under wraps. But one of Makor's founders and primary backers, the philanthropist and former hedge-fund manager Michael Steinhardt, is not shy about it. During a recent interview in his midtown office, which is crammed with menorahs, Torah ornaments, and other items from his world-class collection of Jewish antiquities, he asked, "Are you married? Are you Jewish?" Hearing the answers "No" and "Yes," Steinhardt, a round, bald, walruslike man who resembles Teddy Roosevelt, raised his hands benediction style and intoned, with mock gravity, "May you visit Makor and meet a nice Jewish woman and live with her all the days of your life." He even suggested that any couple who marry after meeting at Makor could get a free week's honeymoon at his home in Anguilla.

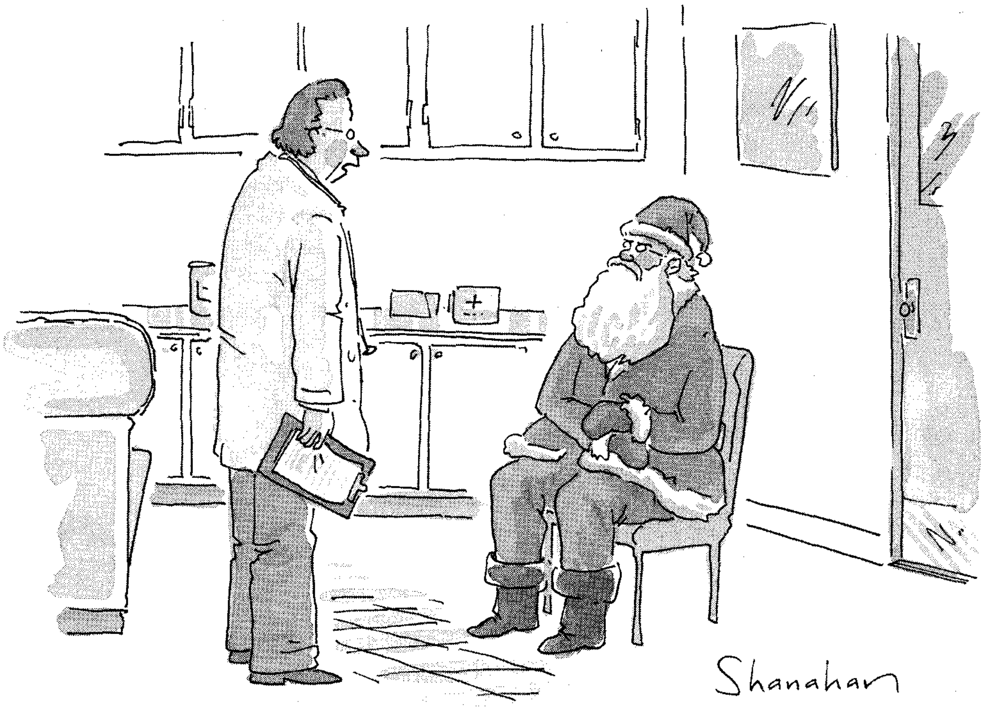
Although Steinhardt is an atheist, he has funded many efforts to spark a spiritual renaissance among non-Orthodox Jews, including Birthright Israel, a program that offers every Jewish young adult in America an all-expenses-paid trip to Israel. In his office, Steinhardt glanced occasionally at a screen on his desk that flashed stock prices as he explained the rationale behind Makor's layout: participants come in for the entertainment on the lower floors, then ascend to the culture (art and films) on the second, then reach the classrooms on the third. "The idea is that as one goes up in the building, one goes up in Jewish learning," he said.

The academic offerings on the third floor have a distinctly New Age cast. Rabbi Bachman of N.Y.U. disapproves: "It's like, 'Madonna's hot, so let's set up a kabbalah center.' I think Judaism should be countercultural. It shouldn't succumb to contemporary marketing strategies. It will end up changing the product."

But Rabbi Marcelo Bronstein, of Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, which attracts hundreds of singles to its free-wheeling Friday-night services on the Upper West Side, believes that Makor's New Age tilt is where non-Orthodox Judaism is heading. "It reflects the lack of spirituality within the synagogue," he says. He considers Makor a "creative experiment." The key, he says, is "whether the experiment works—whether people really go upstairs."

On a recent Friday night, the action was all downstairs. The main event was billed as a dessert gathering, but, with all the mingling, milling, and ogling going on among the two hundred attendees, it felt more like a kosher meat market. "Why don't you go up to that guy?" a woman with curly brown hair said to her friend, indicating a tall man across the room. "He's your type." "He's not

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



"It's Lyme disease again."

"I'm sorry, Jim. I love you, but I hate Vermont."

• •

my type at all," the friend shot back.

Glenn, the tall man in question, was checking out the room himself. "Not a very trendy crowd," he sniffed. But, he said, "it's a good place to meet Jews." —MICHAEL MASSING

THE PICTURES

How Jim Carrey got into character for "Man on the Moon."

ONE hot day last summer on the set of "Man on the Moon," the new movie about the late comedian Andy Kaufman, Danny DeVito was sweltering in his period costume: for his role as George Shapiro, Kaufman's manager, he was wearing a striped polyester shirt with a huge wing collar, hip-hugging slacks, and a wide-lapelled jacket of authentic nineteen-seventies corduroy that felt like a carpet. DeVito was also producing the movie, and he explained that, strictly speaking, visitors were not supposed to be there; Jim Carrey, who was playing Kaufman, had insisted on a closed set. Having beaten out stars like Tom Hanks and Nicolas Cage for the part, Carrey was now obsessed by it, arriving for work almost every day not as himself but either as Kaufman or as the alter ego that Kaufman had created, an obnoxious lounge singer named Tony Clifton. Carrey was constantly wearing one of these masks, and he never let them slip, DeVito said, so that the shooting of the movie had in itself turned into a wiggy and sometimes risky adventure, almost like a Kaufman routine. The word seemed to be that—well, that Carrey had gone a little crazy. "I'll sneak you on set later," DeVito said. "I want you to see Jim's work. It's miraculous."

Then he started reminiscing about Andy Kaufman, with whom he co-starred in the TV show "Taxi." "Andy was this Daliesque, surreal character. His whole life was one routine. His art was mobile, on the run, on the go. Wherever he went, that was his arena. If he came over to your house, your life would become his art. It was exhausting sometimes, but always interesting."

He talked about a "Taxi" episode called "Brother Rat," in which the character named Louie gets a visit from his brother. "The producers told me this guy Tony Clifton is gonna play the part, and I said, 'Who is he?' And they said to me, 'Look, it's in Andy's contract that we have to give this guy Tony a part in four episodes and he really is Andy but he'll never admit that he's Andy.' "

DeVito paused. "So now we gotta go do the show, and what am I supposed to do? I can see it was Andy dressed up like another guy, but he was doing it so well he wasn't Andy. When he walked in he really looked and carried himself so different. He was this other guy. He was Tony Clifton and he was an asshole, he was a real miserable, rotten, belligerent, snide, sarcastic asshole."

On the first day of rehearsals, DeVito recalled, "Tony Clifton" arrived late, toting a rewrite of the script, in which the Judd Hirsch character had disappeared entirely and the character played by Jeff Conaway had been deprived of all his lines. (They'd been given to Tony Clifton.) A fistfight broke out between Hirsch and Kaufman—or, rather, between Hirsch and Clifton.

"Paramount was paying a million bucks a week for the show, and they expected the goods," DeVito said. "So we fired Tony Clifton, who was really Andy Kaufman. When Andy came back from his 'club date' in San Francisco and we showed him some film of the firing, he sat there and watched and shook his head, saying it was terrible. Because the security guards had been forced to drag Tony out. Andy's face never cracked, there wasn't even the glimmer of a crack, because he wasn't Tony. He *felt* for Tony."

Just then there was a knock on the trailer door and, before DeVito could answer, Jim Carrey burst angrily through it—or, rather, not Jim Carrey but Tony Clifton, which is to say Jim Carrey as Andy Kaufman as Tony Clifton—looking like the seediest of Las Vegas lounge singers, in big sunglasses, a shiny brown suit, and a tragic mustache. Carrey/Kaufman/Clifton carried himself with his head thrust forward and a stooping back; the muscles on the side of his neck were taut wires of rage. "Danny," he said in an obnoxious nasal sneer. "I want to talk to you outside."

DeVito was rattled. "I have to go

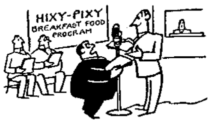
now," he said. "I have to deal with Tony."

Apparently, Carrey/Kaufman/Clifton had learned that there was an unauthorized visitor on the set.

"We'll try and do this again," DeVito said in a steely voice when he returned, obviously angry about what had occurred. The option of calling Carrey's bluff simply hadn't been available, just as it had proved unavailable in an earlier layer of reality, on "Taxi," all those years ago. —RICHARD RAYNER

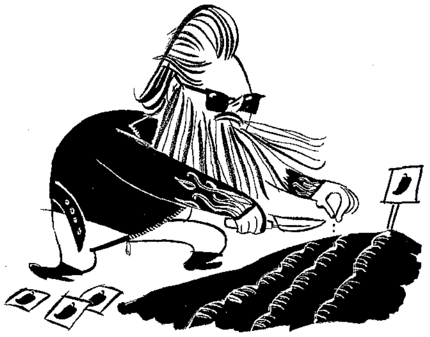
FIRECRACKER DEPT.

The Burpee-seed people go the celebrity-spokesman route.



BILL HUFNAGLE, better known as Biker Billy, is stump-ugly in the grand cycling tradition, with a slop-bucket-size head and a pirate's beard billowing out over a standard-issue roadhouse gut. This past growing season, W. Atlee Burpee & Co., the hundred-and-twenty-four-year-old bastion of crown vetch and Verbascum, made gardening history by naming Biker Billy its jalapeño mascot and pepper front man. Billy now hulks in a patch of peppers on page 13 of the Burpee catalogue, between the Seedless Sugar Baby Watermelons and the Sweet Burpless Cucumbers.

"You will never meet a nicer person than Biker Billy," Michele Addy, a Burpee marketing assistant, said the other day when she was asked about the forty-three-year-old New Jersey native. Addy sounds more accustomed to talking about shade tolerance or fall border composition, but these days much of her time is spent booking appearances for Billy and arranging for his custom-built Harley—also known as the Burpee Pepper Bike—to be hauled to various biker convocations, where Billy gives his famous (to the biker and public-access-cable worlds) cooking and gardening demonstrations. The Pepper Bike is immensely popular. It's a fuchsia 1999 Road King Classic with "Burpee" emblazoned in biker Fraktur on the gas tank, and a pair of propane-powered "afterburners" that throw two-foot flames from a special set of tailpipes—an effect that is part Evel Knievel and part unwitting metaphor for the human gastrointestinal tract's response to pepper-laden cuisine.



Biker Billy

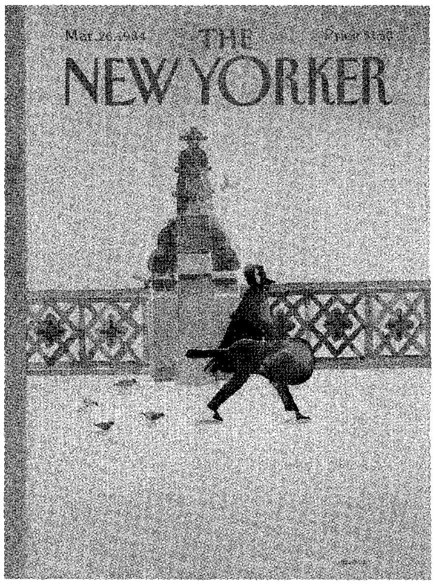
It was George Ball, the president of Burpee, who first saw Billy's potential as a jalapeño pitchman, when he caught an episode of Billy's public-access cooking show, "Biker Billy Cooks with Fire." Billy seemed to be the missing link of pepper marketing: bikers have grown older and become more prone to nesting, and the teak-bench set still harbors a longing, however sublimated, for the romance of rebellion. Who better to bridge the gap than a soulful vegetarian biker who cooks?

Last year, Burpee created a jalapeño hybrid that bears Billy's name and, in a Copernican break with company tradition, put a photograph of Billy on the seed packet. Burpee hybrids have commemorated gardening nobility down through the ages—Martha Washington (petunias), Rudy Vallee and Franklin Roosevelt (dahlias), Helen Hayes (zinnias)—but the seed packets themselves have never borne a human likeness until now.

Biker Billy peppers were developed to be explosively hot, the rocket-propelled grenades of jalapeños. On the Scoville scale, which measures the level of capsaicin, the incendiary chemical in peppers, ordinary green jalapeños register between two thousand and five thousand. Fire-engine-red Biker Billy hybrids register between six thousand and eight thousand Scovilles, creeping up behind the fearsome habanero, the hottest pepper in the world.

Billy—a man who has actually created a recipe for habanero-laced bananas over ice cream—has a chef's philosophical interest in his favorite ingredient. "Peppers heighten your awareness," he says. "The capsaicin triggers our pain receptors, and our bodies then produce endorphins, which are painkillers, so you get this blast of feeling really good. Peppers add a certain light."

Currently barnstorming with the Pepper Bike on a nine-city "International Motorcycle Tour," Billy will come off the road in mid-March, just in time to start the seeds for the century's first crop of Biker Billys. When he was asked how he felt about the gardening tribute that Burpee has paid him, Billy said, "Look, Halley's comet comes around only once in a lifetime. Biker Billy jalapeños will come up every summer. People are going to cook all these meals with them and be illuminated. It will go on long past me." —GUY MARTIN



POSTSCRIPT

SUSAN DAVIS, who painted fifteen covers for this magazine, died on December 20th, at the age of fifty-one. It is an especially sad event not only because of her youth but because of the great vitality of her watercolors and drawings. Davis was an artist of whimsy and light, qualities not in great evidence these days, when a labored irony is the most conventional mode. In her covers, her pen-and-ink drawings for the Washington *Post*, and her children's books, she was an artist of unclouded optimism, and, while her works did not exactly reflect the world (the world is too dark, too complicated for that), they did sweeten it—a worthy mission and one for which we're grateful. ♦

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OUR FAR-FLUNG CORRESPONDENTS

FALLOUT

Paducah's secret nuclear disaster.

BY BOBBIE ANN MASON

ON the national radar screen, Paducah, Kentucky, is a provincial town with a funny name, but here in the western end of the state it was never an inconsequential place. I grew up on a farm near the small town of Mayfield, and Paducah was so far away—twenty-six miles—that we went there only on special occasions. It was the city, the Mecca for several counties of farmland. It had department stores, fine ladies' shops, movie theatres. I was dazzled when, as a child in the nineteen-forties, I went shopping with my grandparents on a Saturday. We dressed up and wandered through the riverfront Market House, where exotic produce—even oysters—arrived by train. On the way into Paducah, we passed the railroad repair shop, with huge locomotives squatting in the yard—an impressive sight that made me think important industry occurred here, something that linked our area to the whole world.

Downtown Paducah was ritzy. In high school, I attended a dance at the swank pseudo-Tudor Hotel Irvin Cobb, named for a novelist and humorist who had appeared in a movie. He won the O. Henry prize for the best short story in America in 1922. But Paducah's true star was Alben W. Barkley, who was born in a log house and worked his way up in society and politics through a long career in Congress, eventually becoming Vice-President under Harry S. Truman. After President Truman dropped atomic bombs on Japan to end the Second World War, Barkley—Paducah's favorite son—contrived to bring one of the nation's first atomic plants to his home turf. Everybody called it the bomb plant, even though it didn't really make bombs; it processed and enriched the fuel for them. Paducah, Barkley argued, had just the location—the site of the Kentucky Ordnance Works, which had manufactured explosives for conventional bombs during the last war. It was a logical shift to the new technology that America's defense depended on. And, in a gesture of pork-barrel politics gone nuclear, Barkley bequeathed a lasting gift to his hometown—uranium.

The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant began enriching uranium fuel in 1952. This top-secret business was something like increasing the octane in gasoline—putting the oomph in the bomb. Helping to create A-bombs was a giddy, lucrative endeavor, and Paducah began to change. The first apartment buildings I ever saw shot up while the plant was being built, in the early fifties. Twenty thousand construction workers jammed the town, and local people rented out spare rooms and barn stalls—any available nook—for the newcomers to sleep in. At a time when "The Walt Disney Story of Our Friend the Atom" was a popular book, and Nikita Khrushchev's name was on every tongue, and Sputnik was terrifyingly in orbit above us, Paducah was called upon to be alert—and secretive—in exchange for good jobs and the chance to beat the Russians. It wasn't afraid. Doomsday wasn't going to happen in Paducah, not as long as the plant helped supply the nation with its friendly atomic arsenal. Today, the plant enriches uranium for nuclear-power reactors instead of atomic bombs, but workers still affectionately call it the bomb plant. License-plate holders from the nineteen-seventies show Paducah's namesake, Chief Paduke, on the left and an atomic cloud on the right, framing the words "Paducah, the Atomic City."

LAST summer, Paducah's deal with atomic energy seemed to be exposed as a bargain with the Devil. The news was packaged in one explosive bundle in the Washington *Post,* on August 8th: radioactive-waste dumps, safety violations, bureaucratic lies, cancer, environmental pollution. Whistleblowers, in a sealed lawsuit filed in June (it has since been opened), charged that

CURT TEICH ARCHIVES/LAKE COUNTY MUSEUM; MICHAEL WILLIAMSON/WASHINGTON POST

former operators had defrauded the government by covering up knowledge of widespread radiation contamination, without regard for the safety of the workers. The *Post* reported stories of nuclear waste being treated lackadaisically—as if it were no more dangerous than kitchen compost. Workers routinely breathed heavy black uranium dust, and some said that supervisors sprinkled it on the cafeteria food—to prove that the dust was harmless. Workers handled so much of a uranium compound called greensalt that their skin turned green, like the Jolly Green Giant's. Their bedsheets at home were stained green.

Even worse, the *Post* reported that many workers had also unwittingly handled plutonium—for decades. Plutonium, which is deadly and cancer-causing, was never supposed to be at the Paducah plant. It had arrived during the Cold War, along with other highly radioactive fission by-products, as an impurity in shipments of used uranium. And it remained in the plant, like an unwelcome guest, dirtying up the place. The plutonium was in the uranium dust that the workers breathed.

The workers never made much fuss about safety conditions, although the plant was becoming its own toxic-waste dump—tons of radioactive scrap metal and cylinders of depleted uranium were piling up with nowhere to go. Toxic trash was tossed over the fence into an adjoining wildlife area, and local wells had become contaminated. Then plutonium was detected in a ditch outside the fence. And a radioactive, technetium-tainted underground plume of water was inching toward the Ohio River. Paducah, exemplary heartland town, where people went to church and gave the time of day to strangers, thought it had been spared such modern ills. The local press—the Paducah *Sun*—had downplayed the dangers. Until the Washington *Post* showed up, it was as though all the toxic trash were just part of the furniture—the price Paducah paid to have a thriving economy, the price paid to help win the Cold War.

Plutonium is heavy and it doesn't move fast, but, when I heard that it was present at our local nuclear-fuel refinery, I felt as if a plutonium-polluted plume were headed toward me. This wasn't Chernobyl—a nuclear power plant run amok. It was personal. My sister had worked at the bomb plant for several years during the late seventies. I E-mailed her in Florida, where she now lives. "I guess I was exposed," she answered. "But don't worry. If you got it you got it, and there is nothing that can be done—but maybe it can for the next generation." She reminded me how good the plant had been to its employees. The salaries were the highest around, and the benefits were off the scale. Besides, she told me, everything was so secret there. Nobody talked. You felt you were doing something important, something good for the country.

Greetings from
PADUCAH
KENTUCKY
THE ATOMIC CITY

Around town, people didn't seem worried about atomic pollution. "If Tom Brokaw came, then it would be real," one resident said.

It was late in the dust-bowl summer, and dust from the desiccated fields sifted onto my car when I drove to Paducah from my home in central Kentucky. I was trying to think of a reasonable synonym for "freaked out," which was just about how I felt. The guy who pumped my gas said there was too much else to worry about in this world for him to be concerned about loose isotopes or technetium seepage. Wars, earthquakes, and such.

From Paducah, I continued west to Future City, where construction workers were housed when the plant was being built. Now it was just a crossroads, with a grocery and a barbecue eatery. The bomb plant was nearby, and just up a parallel road was Heath High School. The school had been the site, in 1997, of one of the first of the string of school shootings. A fourteen-year-old boy gunned down three of his classmates in a prayer meeting in the lobby. I remembered the reporters and the television crews descending on the place like paratroopers, and I imagined that Paducah must feel jinxed now. The atomic-waste scare was bringing the news crews rushing back. The same barbecue joint fed both frenzies. I came to a halt at the crossroads. I was reluctant to look at either of these scenes—the plant or the school—and I didn't know if it was from fear or from sadness. I drove back to Paducah.

DOTTIE BARKLEY has been a family friend for twenty years. When she was seven years old, she was a guest on "I've Got a Secret," one of the old TV quiz-game shows. Her secret was that her grandfather was Vice-President Alben W. Barkley, Paducah's local hero. On another occasion, she was taken to the Plaza Hotel in New York, where she pitched a fit because the Palm Court didn't serve catfish. She cried, "If I can't have catfish, then I don't want anything!"

We were sitting in Dottie's back yard among morning glories and gourd vines. Seven cats and Winnie, a chow-shar-pei mix, crowded around us. "This is outrageous," Dottie said, fuming about the local coverage. "The other Sunday, the Louisville *Courier-Journal* had a big front-page story about plutonium in Paducah, but there wasn't a peep about it in the Paducah *Sun* until the next day. Most of Paducah didn't even know about this!"

Did she think people felt betrayed? I asked.

"Hell, most people don't really care," she said. "Everybody at the plant knew they were working with dangerous stuff. Maybe they didn't all know it was plutonium, but they knew. Now people don't want to talk about it. They don't want to lose their jobs."

To visualize Dottie, imagine Marilyn Monroe—outfitted by the Limited—with a pickup truck. She is glamorously bohemian, with a blond heap of curly hair. And, as Alben Barkley's granddaughter, she holds a unique social position in Paducah, even though she avoids the cocktail-party carrousel of the local big dudes, where she might rightfully belong—not her style. She works at the Party Mart ("Paducah's Most Interesting Store").

She explained how the plant got here. "Granddaddy just muscled it through. He was best friends with Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn. And it was such an exciting thing when the plant came! The plant gave people good jobs. It kept a lot of people from starving. And now look what's happened. There's so much good—and so much horror." She shuddered. "Granddaddy couldn't have imagined this. He couldn't have known how it would turn out. Could he?"

A cat named Dinah Shore jumped into my lap. "Dear Hearts and Gentle People"—the song by the real Dinah—ran through my mind. I thought of the fifties, when a war-weary nation quelled its fears of the bomb by listening to songs like this, or to Doris Day's "Que Será, Será."

Dottie said, "The people out at the plant were so innocent back when it started. They used to handle uranium with their bare hands!" She bent over briefly to hug her dog. "You know, you should talk to my ex-husband Joe. He's worked at the bomb plant for twenty-six years, and he can tell you what it's like. They're like a big family out there, and he's been exposed to just about everything."

As I was leaving, I noticed a photograph in the dining room of Dottie with her parents and her grandfather, taken when Barkley Airport was dedicated, in 1948. Dottie, a child in a shiny taffeta dress with a cross-sash, has a missing front tooth.

"Look at me in my queen outfit," Dottie said, laughing at herself in the picture. "Get Joe to take you out to the bomb plant. It's so eerie."

A DIFFERENT Joe, Joe Harding, had known about the dangers years ago. He died in 1980, of stomach cancer. He began working at the plant in 1952, and his jobs included flushing impurities out of the processing pipes. Apparently, a residue of all kinds of radioactive things—plutonium, neptunium, and other contaminants—remained in the system once the processing was completed. Even today, there is a residue clinging to the pipes, like what's left in the skillet after you cook onions. Harding was chronically ill, but when he declared that he had radiation poisoning no one believed him. He had weird toenail-like growths coming out of his elbows and kneecaps, but people only laughed. The management said his illnesses were caused by eating too much country ham. His disability benefits and insurance claims were denied. A few years after his death, lawyers representing his widow ordered that his body be exhumed, and his bones revealed a level of uranium hundreds of times above normal.

Normal? Radiation is good for you; it boosts the immune system, according to a local engineer in an August 23, 1999, *Sun* column. "Radiation . . . may benefit the health of those exposed . . . a low dose of radiation actually increases immunity," he wrote. The plant's neighbors must glow with good health, then, because radioactive technetium-99 has turned up in the gardens—in banana peppers and turnip greens. Traces of plutonium were found in deer in the wildlife sanctuary—not enough to hurt you, officials said. To be in any kind of danger, "You would have to eat the whole deer," the Kentucky state health commissioner insisted on TV last summer—his remark delivered with the fervor of a political stump speech. Why, I wondered, do people always seem to be telling us that we can eat radioactive waste?

DOWNTOWN is "Historic Paducah"—antique stores, funky shops, and Saturday-night street parties. Like many other towns, Paducah is energetically reclaiming itself from the mall, and you can almost imagine the main street in its heyday. Tourists from the Mississippi Queen and the Delta Queen stream in through gates in the flood wall, which is being painted with murals depicting the history of the city. The showpiece of downtown is a quilt museum. Paducah is morphing from the Atomic City to the Quilt City. You might think that quaint old quilts are a clever atomic-age coverup, but the museum is on the cutting edge. Its quilts are postmodern.

I was headed for the Paducah Public Library. I had been mulling over the phrases "acceptable risk" and "eat the whole deer." ("I can't believe I ate the whole deer!") And, for that matter, just what is a "trace"? What is an acceptable number of picocuries of plutonium? How many would you want to have settle in your brain, your lungs, your islets of Langerhans?

Plant managers claim that the amount of plutonium that came to Paducah was only twelve ounces—a piddling amount. Neptunium may be a worse problem. It is less radioactive than plutonium, but forty pounds of it were brought to the plant in the ill-fated uranium shipments. Plutonium and neptunium are transuranics, metals that are heavier than uranium. They are artificially created radioactive elements. They don't occur in nature; they pop up when atoms are split. I knew that plutonium is a hundred thousand times as radioactive as uranium, with a half-life of twenty-four thousand years—longer than civilization has existed. A beeline to the encyclopedia revealed to me what no one was admitting: twelve ounces is a lot. Theoretically, that much plutonium contains as much energy as nearly six thousand tons of TNT. More to the point, it's incredibly toxic, even in microscopic amounts. The "safe" dose for a human being is 0.13 micrograms. Thus twelve ounces is enough to provide a maximum legal limit of ingested plutonium for about two and a half billion people, or nearly half the world.

Around town, though, people didn't seem worried. There were virtually no letters to the editor of the Paducah *Sun*, and few people seemed willing to voice any fear of atomic pollution—as though talking about radioactivity might be enough to shut the plant down. TV NewsChannel 6 (which is owned by the *Sun's* parent company) seemed more alarmed by weather scares than by radioactive-waste dumps or the presence of plutonium in the food chain.

I chatted a while with Iris Garrott, one of the librarians, and she reminded me that that was how folks were around here. "There's a sense that they took the risk for the jobs," she said. "They went along with it. People here are concerned about personal and emotional things—like the shooting at Heath. That's when everybody gets in a stir, when it touches you personally." Iris, who had three flashy earrings in her left ear and one in her right, leaned forward. She said, "But the news is sinking in. Every day, something new comes out. Everybody's on edge, I think. They're just waiting."

For what?

"They're waiting for somebody big to come to town—Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, Tom Brokaw. If Tom Brokaw came, then it would be real."

JOE GORLINE, Dottie's ex-husband, loves working at the bomb plant, as his father did. From the start, Joe's father told him, "This stuff is not good," and Joe has been careful. His father died from chlorine-damaged lungs, but Joe has been loyal to the plant and to its important secret work.

He looks strong and healthy. He is tan and muscular, somewhat large in the middle, and has a long gray ponytail, fastened at intervals with colored rubber bands. He lives with his pit bull-Rottweiler, Baba Ram Dass (Bubba, for short). In his house are a Finnish 20-mm. antitank rifle and a Second World War German MG 34, and a safe filled with his gun collection.

Joe repairs equipment in what's called the cascade—a six-hundred-mile complex of pipes which comprises the enrichment system. Uranium hexafluoride gas, or UF_6, is sieved repeatedly in the cascade to get a richer concentration of uranium—a panning-for-gold procedure. Joe might replace joint seals or weld pipes that carry UF_6. For such work, he wears a safety suit with a respirator. "I call it my banana suit," he told me. "It's yellow, with yellow rubber boots, orange gloves."

Orange gloves? I asked.

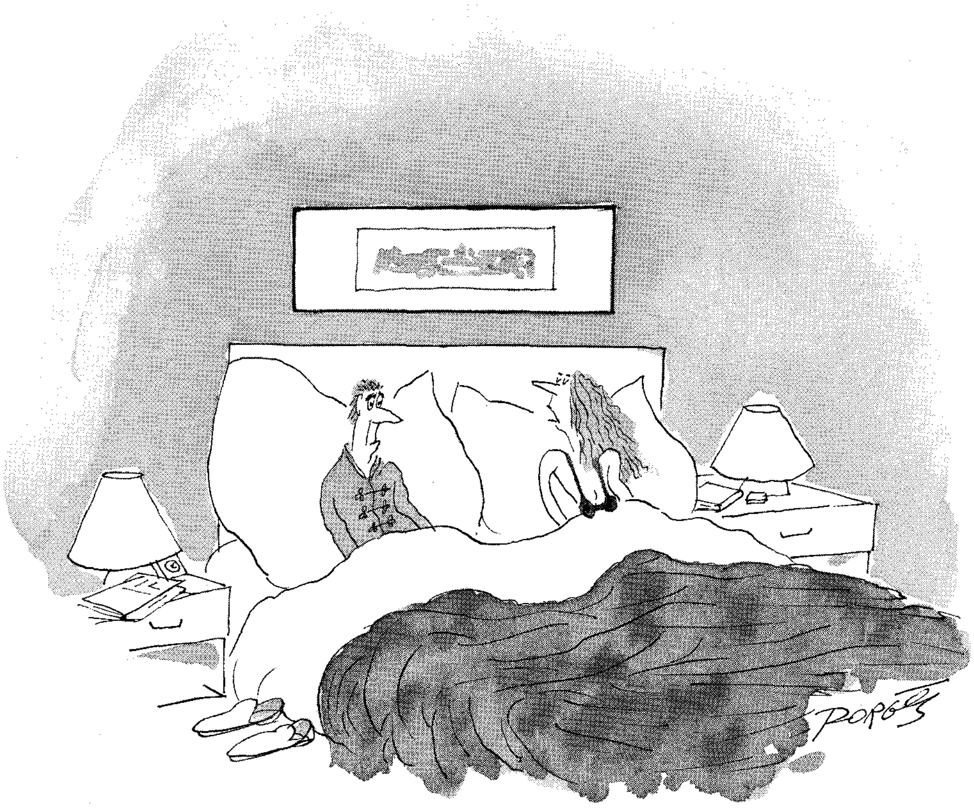
"It's a statement," he said with a grin. "Accessories are everything."

Doesn't he get hot in that suit?

"Oh, I'm used to the heat. But it's noisy! It's like being in the crankcase of your car. I haven't heard a bird chirp in years." He laughed and cupped his ear. "I listen to the machines. My job is to keep things running. After a while, you want it to run. You develop pride in your work."

Wasn't he afraid of radioactivity?

"There's nothing out there now that scares me. The safety has improved. But if anybody got big doses I did. Fifteen years ago, the same place I'd go now in my banana suit, I went in with coveralls. We'd get covered with black oxide dust



"And you're also trailing in the polls."

and it would be all over us, and then we'd go to the cafeteria and wallow around. I got UF_6 and black oxide in my mouth and eyes." He laughed. "It tastes terrible!"

He showed me a small crater on the side of his nose, where he was burned by fluorine. "It would condense on a vent and drip over the door. One day, a guy went out the door and something dripped on his nose. He went nuts. He thought he'd been burned until we yelled, 'No, that's just pigeon shit!' But it dripped on me one day. My nose started smoking on the end. When you start smoking, you have to go to the dispensary. One guy's nose was worse than mine. It was flat."

I knew I ought to see the plant, but I wasn't sure I wanted to go. I'm health-conscious. I consume antioxidants, count fat molecules, pick organic turnip greens. Did I really need to go on a treasure hunt for transuranics? Should I carry a Geiger counter? Wear throwaway shoes?

I rode to the plant with Joe in his old Chevrolet truck. He flicked his cigarette discreetly out the cracked-open window. Paducah's urban sprawl is westward, toward the plant. Around the mall are the typical clusters of ugliness which deface America. In the subdivisions, Ten Commandments signs had sprouted in people's yards. The tall houses in the extravagant new developments looked overpriced and too close together, but I was glad that at least they weren't usurping all the fine farmland. Just past Future City, we turned onto a road that led to the plant, lined with small farms and modest homes. The corn was dying.

"The soybeans are strangely green," I said.

"It's plutonium that does it," Joe said. "All that radiation."

Sometimes you have to take what Joe says with a grain of greensalt.

The plant, which occupies a fenced-in area nearly the size of Central Park, is a sprawling gray complex. The architecture resembles the back end of a shopping mall. Right away, I noticed what was stored in the front yard—the blue cylinders of depleted uranium, rows and rows of them. Each of these cylinders—there are thirty-seven thousand of them—weighs between ten and fourteen tons. They made me think of a stockpile of pods from "Invasion of the Body Snatchers." The cylinders will be there until someone figures out an economical way to recover the last traces of valuable uranium in them. In the meantime, everyone hopes that they won't rust, or leak—or explode.

As we drove around the outskirts of the plant, I glimpsed some of the "hot spots" the Washington *Post* had written about—small areas where toxic waste had been spilled or buried or dumped. They were roped off and low to the ground, with little warning signs. At one time, five hundred picocuries of plutonium were detected on the plant grounds—thirty-three times what the government deemed an acceptable standard at blast sites in the South Pacific. Some of the buildings are so heavily contaminated that they have been abandoned, and, unfortunately, wildlife now live in them.

The plant itself is not a reassuring image: it's aging and corroding. There are six processing buildings, and they are all hooked together with pipes—long, unsupported, seemingly precarious overhead pipes. I was trying to grasp the way the plant worked, the way the gas was pumped through a network of compressors and converters—the cascade. It was such a mysterious concept—waterfalls, something beautifully flowing—that for a moment I almost wanted to see it. My sister saw it once when she worked in the safety department. A supervisor took her inside one of the big buildings which housed part of the cascade. He wanted to show her what their work was all about.

We turned north, on a gravel road alongside the chain-link fence, and spectacular waste dumps came into view: the rusty scrap heap, the old cylinders, the giant mound of crushed fifty-five-gallon drums (Drum Mountain, it's called). Uranium, radionuclides, "uranium daughters" (a phrase that captured my fancy), and transuranics infused these collections like mildew in damp clothes. Neptunium, plutonium, technetium, old kitchen sinks—it all seemed to be here in the scrap piles, as common-looking as a junk yard of wrecked cars. In a way, the scene seemed normal. It's a time-honored rural practice to save your trash in the yard—what won't fit on the porch. You dam the creeks with old mattress springs and broken refrigerators, to stop soil erosion. An earthquake on the dreaded New Madrid fault could turn this region, embraced by the Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Cumberland Rivers, into mush. Where would all this irradiated trash wind up then?

The plant had been built on a thirty-four-hundred-acre federal property, where the old munitions plant—the

"Here I was, all this time, worrying that maybe I'm a selfish person, and now it turns out I've been suffering from compassion fatigue."

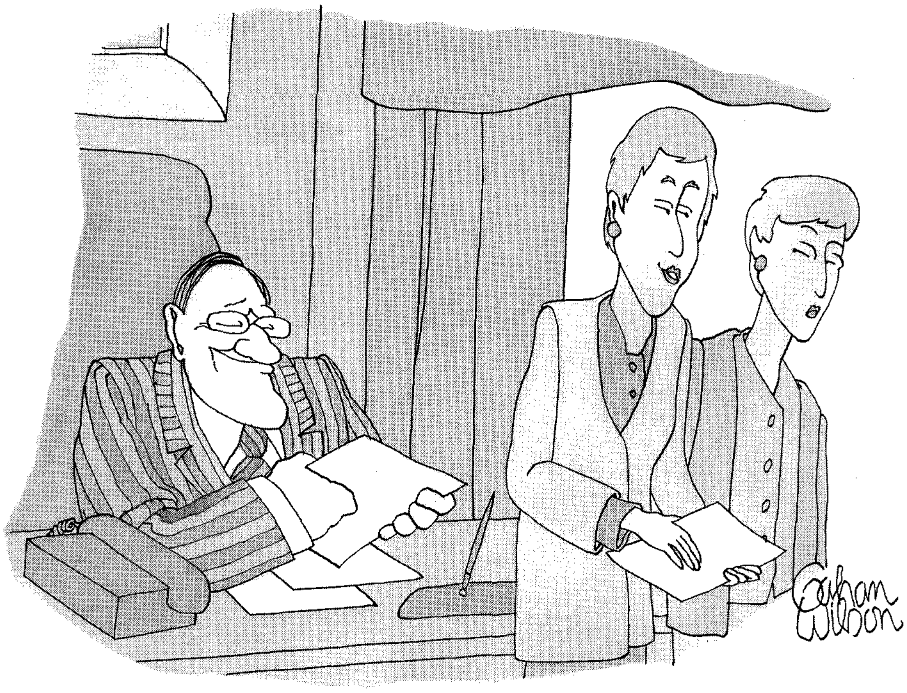
original Kentucky Ordnance Works, or the K.O.W., as it was called—operated during the Second World War. Most of the land that surrounds the plant is the wildlife area and extends almost to the Ohio River. Joe was driving through this wilderness now. I knew that there were still toxic chemicals from the ordnance works in the ground. (The K.O.W. had manufactured TNT.) And now radioactive pollution had spread through this area. The Washington *Post* said that two dozen radioactive rubble piles from the bomb plant dotted the landscape, but I didn't see any. Radioactivity was an invisible, ghostly presence.

"Over there's a great pond for frogs," Joe said. "I used to frog gig there a lot with my son."

We passed other ponds, where recently the fish had been killed so that nobody would eat them. People have hunted and fished here for decades; no one wants to throw back a good catch. I was aware that this wildlife area is virtually sacred. People feel so deeply about hunting here that they would be up in arms, so to speak, if the area were condemned because of mere toxic waste. We twisted and turned down gravel roads; then we were in the scrubby fields, driving on what were just old worn paths that Joe said he knew by heart.

"I love this old truck!" he burst out gleefully as we bounced over a bump. The tracks ran beneath thick weeds and tall grass. We were in a labyrinth of ancient trails. In a clearing, we passed a group of teen-agers slouching around a pickup truck, playing hooky. This park is where kids come to party, Joe told me, and schoolchildren have picnics in these fields, where, over the years, thirty tons of uranium were flushed into the streams, saturating the earth, and recently an unmarked pile of contaminated railroad crossties was discovered.

We passed a pair of sirens on poles, with signs—what to do if the siren sounds. (Basically, run for at least two miles.) A concrete water tower loomed ahead, then another and another. We were among the ruins of the ordnance works—concrete hulks. Vines crawled over the gray shapes. Even though nature was taking over, the landscape itself was a ruin, shrivelled by the drought, the sumac and sassafras reddening prematurely.



"He's been in a marvellous mood ever since he learned one out of every hundred and fifty Americans is in jail."

I had lost my sense of direction, and I didn't fancy crawling through scrubland fertilized by uranium or TNT, but Joe wasn't worried. It was a hot day. He had a jug of water and a cooler of Cokes. I clutched my bottle of water from France. We got out of the truck and waded through tickseed and ironweed, then down a gravel path. Joe, sockless in sandals, reminisced about youthful outings here as we peered inside some of the dank old buildings. They were dark, with graffiti-covered walls. A disintegrating couch, its stuffing spewing, sat beneath some lingering asbestos that hung from the ceiling like Spanish moss.

I was either in a gothic romance novel or in an apocalyptic Italian movie. I faced a wall, spray-painted with a message: "Live in Fear, the End Is Near."

I felt suddenly uncomfortable to be in a place that had an unhealthy obsession with bombs and guns and other insidious things that kill people. I saw the K.O.W. as the ancestor of the bomb plant, and I knew the plant was creating its own ineradicable legacy. The sins of the past—uranium daughters—lay strewn over the landscape and in the water and under the earth. From TNT-based weaponry in the Second World War to the first atomic bombs and the nuclear stockpiles of the Cold War, the wartime urgency left a habit of mind and a profusion of poisons.

Dottie had shown me a photograph Joe took of her out here. She was standing in an open window in one of these ruined buildings, and in the photo the light had created an apparition above her head, merging with her bright hair. She said it looked like a dove, but its glaring whiteness reminded me of an atomic blast.

On another day, screwing up my courage, I returned to the plant alone, determined to see the cascade for myself—heat and noise and all. It was a bleak, gray, rainy day, but after the drought I was glad to see it. I was in my rain gear, with bright-yellow boots. I wished I had Joe's banana suit.

My guide wore a thermoluminescent dosimeter, a radiation-monitoring badge, but she said that I didn't need one, since I wouldn't be allowed anywhere in the plant where there might be radiation. I was a little disappointed but mostly relieved. I was allowed into the control center, a round domed concrete building. Inside, on the curved wall, was an immense diagram of pipes and com-

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pressors and converters and electric motors. It was fifties technology, intricate but decidedly pre-Microsoft. It was like the cockpit of Captain Video's spaceship. The diagram on the wall, with lots of red and green lights and dials, mimicked the cascade. The whole system has never been shut down since it started, in 1952. If it were shut down, the gas would cool and turn into a solid, and the cascade would clog up like a cholesterol-choked artery. A gauge on the wall—like a big clock—had a dial indicating the gas level.

I was left to imagine the mighty cascade. It was like a Rube Goldberg cartoon version of the human circulatory system—the crudest technology for something as mysterious as a beating heart. The heart of the mystery of atomic energy, its deadly magic, was a mundane industrial process. Somehow, I could picture Lucy and Ethel in here, running this thing.

THE onset of autumn brought a startling revelation: an accidental uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction was theoretically possible in the plant. Paducah jumped out of its time warp, crashing into the twenty-first century. People were confused and scared. Energy Secretary Richardson visited and promised the moon. He apologized for the plutonium. The plant was buzzing with investigators. Joe E-mailed me, "During the day the plant is a hotbed of activity, auditors everywhere. They don't know whether to shit or go blind." In September, a ten-billion-dollar class-action lawsuit was filed against former contractors, including Union Carbide and Lockheed Martin, claiming, among other things, mental distress and "unjust enrichment." Joe wouldn't join it, and he had no kind words for whistle-blowers. "If I get cancer, I don't even want to know," he told me.

I've been trying to put my finger on why, for so long, Paducah remained passive in the face of danger, something I feel I know intuitively as an insider but which seems to befuddle outsiders. Why did the workers trust some of the government contractors that ran the plant? Did they really believe that giant corporations would look out for their well-being? How could they have been so innocent? Is that how those contractors got away with their colossal abuses?

These are post-Vietnam questions. The same people who are asking these questions seem a bit wistful about the virtues of small towns. All I can say is that such things exist. People here haven't yet plunged into the frantic greed frenzy of the big time. They're independent, proud people—agrarian, basically. They don't want to be told what to do—like "don't hunt on the wildlife refuge"—but once a bargain is made and a trust is built, as it was with the plant from the beginning, they will honor it and they will do as they are asked. It was more than high-paying jobs. Neighborliness, not litigiousness, has always been the norm around here, and the social contract meant getting along by going along. The problem was that the plant had been a good neighbor. It was good to its workers, who kept the secret well.

I'm drawn again to Future City. At the intersection, it seems that the future is nuclear fallout in one direction and guns in the schools in the other. I turn north, toward Heath High School. Driving up, I see kids across the road at band practice. A banner outside the entrance of the school reads, "Rising to the Challenge." Inside, in the lobby, fourteen-year-old Michael Carneal opened fire on the prayer group two years ago. The Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant—a good neighbor—contributed generously to the memorial fund for the three dead girls.

I recall that, for some of the students, the instinctive reaction to the massacre was forgiveness. They painted banners that said "We forgive you, Michael" and "We love you, Mike."

And that's the heart of the story. This turning the other cheek, the strange embrace of sudden horror, startled outsiders. The students' anger came later, when grief had set in and the lawyers showed up, but their initial acceptance—their passive non-resistance—was not so surprising in an agricultural region, where farmers forgive the forces they cannot control. Droughts and pestilence are risks the farmer takes at every planting time in every hopeful spring. ♦

YOU BE THE JUDGE

Choose your favorite books of 1999

Dear Reader,

What were the best books published this year?

For the first time in nearly seventy-five years of publishing, *The New Yorker*, a magazine that prizes literary excellence, will award prizes for literary excellence. And we're asking our readers to be the judges. Who's better qualified?

The prizes will recognize works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. A shortlist of five titles in each category has been prepared with the help of some illustrious writers: in fiction, Richard Ford and Jhumpa Lahiri; in nonfiction, Ann Douglas and Jonathan Harr; in poetry, Mark Strand and Susan Wheeler. The final decisions are yours.

You can vote by phone, fax, or E-mail, or by mailing the printed ballot below. But you can vote only once, and you must vote soon. The deadline is January 14, 2000, so that we can announce the winners on February 14th, the seventy-fifth anniversary of this magazine.

There are all kinds of book prizes: the Pulitzer, the National Book Awards, the PEN/Faulkner—and, of course, Oprah. But this is the only prize we know of that lets the reader decide the winner. So please vote.

SELECT ONE FROM EACH CATEGORY:

BEST FICTION 1999

☐ **A STAR CALLED HENRY**
by Roddy Doyle (Viking)
A history of Ireland as told by Henry Smart, a philandering, thuggish good-for-nothing who somehow manages always to do good.

☐ **PLAINSONG**
by Kent Haruf (Knopf)
The story of a small town in Colorado—and the steady, uncontrolled sexuality that seems to run through it.

☐ **HUMMINGBIRD HOUSE**
by Patricia Henley (MacMurray & Beck)
An intensely felt account of being an American, trying to do the right thing, during the troubles in Guatemala.

☐ **A GESTURE LIFE**
by Chang-rae Lee (Riverhead)
A Korean storekeeper in New England is haunted by the atrocities inflicted on the "comfort women" when he was serving in the Japanese Army in the Second World War.

☐ **CLOSE RANGE**
by Annie Proulx (Scribner)
Grimm's Fairy Tales as reconceived in the high plains of Wyoming. Cow handlers, bar girls, bad boys, rodeo hands, and two cowboys who discover the love that dare not speak its name.

BEST NONFICTION 1999

☐ **THE ELEGANT UNIVERSE**
by Brian Greene (Norton)
How relativity and quantum mechanics might come together in a grand, unified "theory of everything."

☐ **THE BIG TEST: THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN MERITOCRACY**
by Nicholas Lemann (Farrar, Straus & Giroux)
The Educational Testing Service propelled the rise of a new élite, but with unbargained-for consequences.

☐ **OUT OF PLACE: A MEMOIR**
by Edward W. Said (Knopf)
An eminent literary scholar tells of growing up in the Middle East and the United States—a Christian among Muslims, an Arab among Americans.

☐ **THE IMMACULATE INVASION**
by Bob Shacochis (Viking)
Eighteen months with Special Forces commandos in Haiti, during Operation Uphold Democracy.

☐ **MORGAN: AMERICAN FINANCIER**
by Jean Strouse (Random House)
A biography finds much to admire in the bogeyman of capitalism.

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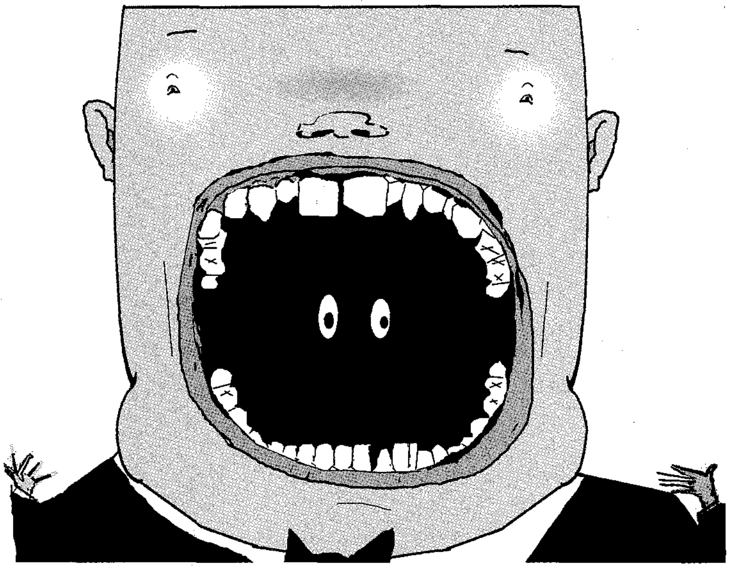
THE MEDIA BEAT GOES ON

BY ROY BLOUNT, JR.



As if incorporating himself as a diarist (theoretically you can write off *everything*), going full frontal as Pay-Per-View's Indecent Docent ("How can you call me phallocentric when you know very well I dress left," indeed), and making an enlightenmint off his hey-why-not-a-quickie-spiritual-memoir memoir "Shoulda Woulda Buddha" were not accomplishments enough for one man: *qui d'autre* but Peri Flange—who not so many years ago was captivating some unquantified segment of the adult Saturday-morning crowd with his mock-ironic (I guess) interactive art-talk series, "Like Watching a Kandinsky Dry"—now proposes to take his stream-of-consciousness Web site (flangeness.com) public.

Trouble is, my old friend Flange (full disclosure: before surviving—by the skin of his bleached teeth—the "Content Blab" fiasco, before embarking upon his short-lived cable show "Behind the Insights," which every week spotlighted a different pundit's assistant—a program on which I was to be showcased the week Hofstra-Stride Rite pulled the plug, I being in those days a dewy-eyed layer of pipe for the Zeitmeister, oh yes, Warren DeCoverley with the Views—and *long* before belatedly bagging the whole concept of telemarketainment, Flange and my third ex-stepmother, Fortuna Letts—who may be recalled, through gauze, as Simplicity on "Simplicity Herself," from which desultory natter-fest I was once *literally* bumped by a *literal* dog-and-pony act, the pony, Toby, having made a name for himself on the Barnyard Channel, and there I am trying to establish myself as Mr. Mitch the Multimedia Maven when I am *literally* bumped out of the frame by this foreshortened *horse*, with a tiny vicious dog on its back, and the crew all guffawing because I wasn't union then and I suppose the pony was—Flange and Letts, yes, *that* dynamic duo, co-scripted an odd sort of ink-sniffing old-media column in *Shafts*, a shamelessly overwritten, marginally post-coherent schlub-pub in large part underwritten by the As If Foundation, whose director, Simon Cork, was subsequently "deposed," as conspiracy buffs would have it, "in a palace [some palace] coup" which I—so I am told, to my secret amusement—am widely suspected of having been a party to—this, mind you, when yours truly was a downy-cheeked, very unpaid As If intern relegated to logging drafts of workshopped poop sheets—which is ludicrous on the face of it to anyone who has felt the chill of my absolute indifference toward persons who occupy what they themselves may consider to be positions of, how you

ISTVAN BANYAI

say, clout—but my views on Flange can hardly be regarded as compromised by any however-juicy *rumors* of my involvement in the As If debacle, given the fact that the aforementioned Ms. Letts, by then the Corkster's, shall we say, squeeze emeritus—whose own vaunted scruples did not prevent her, in one of her patented clit-lit-crit snits over Cork's supposed disrespect for her critique of "Po-Mo Bride," from narcing him out quite groundlessly to the Virus Council—is after all the very person who, in her self-anointed capacity as the picture-your-ad-here conscience of the World Wide Web, and in the festering heat of her increasingly exaggerated recollection of a certain "incident" . . . let's just leave it that late-ish one evening in my more flâneurial days I inflicted upon her frequent screening companion Mr. Hervé God-Forbid-Anybody-Should-Pronounce-It-*Harvey* de la Barbara what I have been advised by counsel to stipulate as "perceived physical discomfort" by dint of a simple whap on the upper arm which any halfway robust schoolchild would scarcely have registered, let alone greeted with soap-operatic de la Barbarian howls of transparent anguish and much sloshing of Cosmopolitans . . . has taken it heavy-handedly upon her curiously asymmetrical shoulders to pillory my offhand contribution to the Zeitmeister's Festschrift E-conference as both "cankered" and "soft," although I might mention that I have never indulged in any sort of instantly regrettable intimacy with La Letts [not] or any member of her rather glaringly permeable circle—which if I *had*—under the transient sway of God can only imagine what sort of cheap subveterinary stimulants—might not only explain my current disinclination to bob and weave to the tune of her gala-hopping air kisses—she who is forever unpacking one's gender with the use of her cunning little satirical hand puppet Tex Tosterone, oh I'm so *unmasked*—but also just *might* account for the lady's need-driven characterization of my well-advised reserve toward her person as some sort of inverse acknowledgment of her being in a position to impact upon my critical reputation, when, sorry, Homey don't play that, as everyone who has really known me since I was knee-high to, I don't know, something very small with knees, must realize) has lost his edge. ♦

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ANNALS OF CRIME

A DEVIL IN THE HILLS

A murder in a remote Irish village unsettles the new Europe.

BY JOHN MONTAGUE

"THERE is a devil somewhere in the hills of southern Ireland," the producer Daniel Toscan du Plantier wailed, in the pages of *Le Figaro*. He was speaking of West Cork, the part of Ireland where I live, in a nineteenth-century farmhouse in the luminous shadow of Mt. Gabriel—where, legend has it, the last wolf in Ireland was killed. The devil he was referring to had murdered du Plantier's thirty-nine-year-old wife, Sophie, on a moonlit night just before Christmas, 1996. It was the first murder in these remote parts since Civil War days, when Michael Collins was killed in Beal na Blath, the Gap of the Blossoms, a few miles inland.

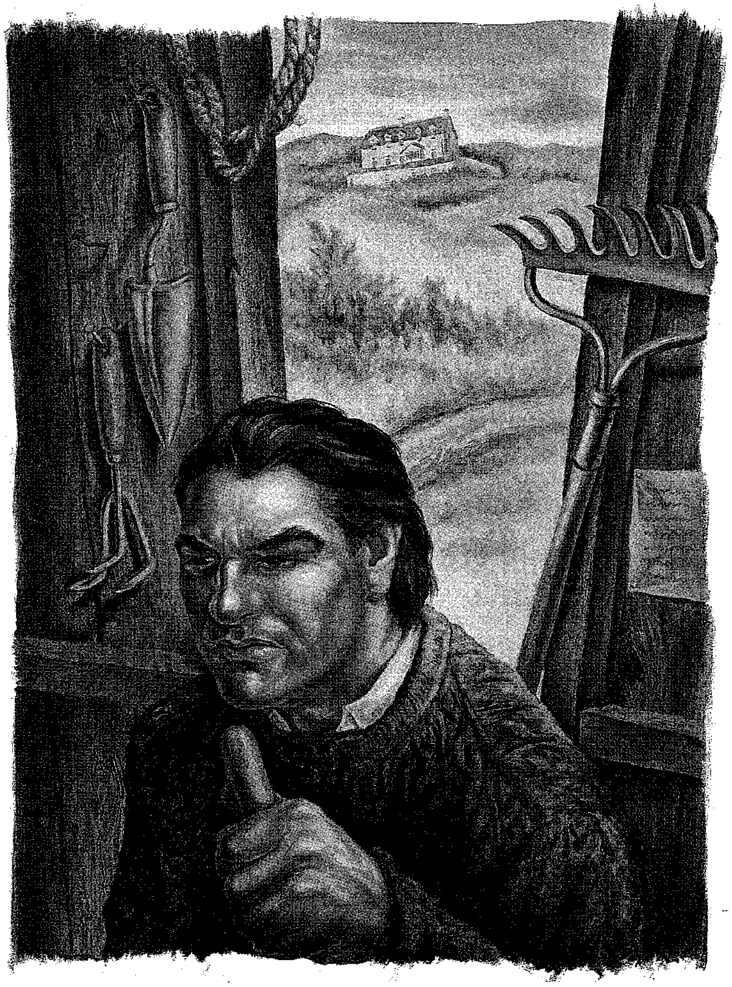
I had spent the days before that Christmas with my companion, the novelist Elizabeth Wassell—who helped to research and write this article—at the Literary Forum in Okinawa, an elongated, serrated island that regards its larger neighbor with much the same ambivalence as Ireland does England. We had gone there from Tokyo, where I had been granted an audience with the Empress. Irish poets vie for the longest meeting with her, and I had outtalked Seamus Heaney by a good thirty minutes. But my contentment waned on the flight home, when I found news of the murder in the *Sunday Times* and realized that we were heading back into turbulence.

CORK is the largest county in Ireland, and West Cork, the scene of the crime, is its most ruggedly beautiful part, with its shipwrecking seas and its bony mountains clothed in heather and gorse. Its center is the town of Skibbereen, beyond which gleam the seaside villages of Schull, Goleen, and Crookhaven. Roaringwater Bay is necklaced with islands, and three finger peninsulas—Mizen Head, Sheep's Head, and Beara—jut into the often wild Atlantic.

Although this region is historically insular (electricity wasn't introduced here until 1954), over the past two decades expatriates and artists have begun to pour in. The Heinz magnate Tony O'Reilly, the actors Jeremy Irons and Sinead Cusack, and the director David Puttnam all have summer houses in West Cork. Elizabeth Hurley and Hugh Grant were beaten to the house of their choice by a rock band. Even Tony Blair has spent holidays here, and the region has become known as "the Irish Riviera."

At the other end of the spectrum are the unemployed, an invading army, since, under the terms of the European Union, anyone with a European passport can settle in Ireland and draw the dole. West Cork has become a Mecca for the eccentric, the lost children of Europe. Many—like the New Age hippies of Coole Mountain, a commune of several hundred families whose pot-smoking disturbs the local police, or *gardaí*—are in flight from overindustrialized European centers. One year, they descended on our village to enact a Dionysiac summer-solstice ceremony, burning a giant effigy and dancing to the beat of tasselled tambourines.

Still, despite a recent slight increase in petty larceny, the savage murder of Sophie Toscan du Plantier was the first incidence of serious violence in the area, and the first crime to have international implications. In the ensuing criminal investigation, two jurisdictions and legal systems have collided, provoking debates in the Irish parliament and creating an uproar in the British and French media.



Ian Bailey, a murder suspect, is an English journalist and gardener who came to West Cork to reinvent himself as an Irish poet.

OWEN SMITH

SOPHIE BOUNIOL had met Daniel Toscan du Plantier in 1990, when she was thirty-three and he was forty-nine. She soon became du Plantier's third wife. (His first, the actress Marie-Christine Barrault, is now married to the director Roger Vadim.) The head of the French Academy of Cinema Arts and a close friend of President Jacques Chirac, du Plantier also ran a film-production company, whose projects included Peter Greenaway's "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover," and he had been made a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur, France's highest cultural honor, that year.

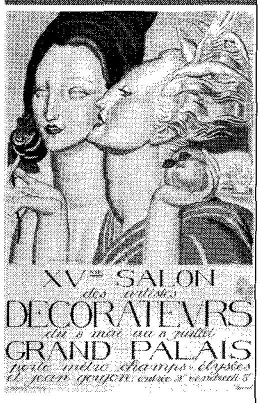
Sophie had the delicate, slightly unconventional style of a Left Bank Parisienne and the birdlike elegance of Mimou. When du Plantier met her, she wanted to act; he convinced her to try a new career as a television-documentary producer and scriptwriter, primarily for the cultural Channel Arte, with which he was connected. Sophie also had a romanticized image of the Irish countryside, which she had visited briefly in her youth—an image fostered by books like Michel Déon's "Un Taxi Mauve." In 1993, du Plantier bought a bulky five-bedroom house in Schull, which would serve as Sophie's refuge from her high-profile life in France. She was often photographed at her husband's side at media events, but she also slipped away to Ireland four or five times a year. Occasionally she would bring someone with her—her teen-age son from her first marriage or another member of her family—but du Plantier joined her only once, and she was listed in the local telephone directory under her maiden name. Among the locals, she had a reputation as something of a loner. For a while she even feuded with her nearest neighbor over a shared gate that she felt should stay closed.

On Friday, December 20, 1996, Sophie landed at Cork Airport (the security video shows her trundling a surprising amount of luggage) and drove to her house along the winding coast road in a rented Ford Fiesta. She chatted briefly with Denis Quinlan at the Courtyard Bar, in Schull, and with Tom Brosnan, the jovial owner of the Spar Supermarket, both of whom she knew well. Over the weekend she visited many of her local haunts, including O'Sullivan's Pub, on the quayside in Crookhaven, a village that has recently become so popular with visiting French yachtsmen that it's known as "little Saint-Tropez." She also went for a walk on bleak Three Castle Head and called on some friends, with whom she had a strange, melancholy conversation. She said that, while walking, she had come upon the ruins of Dun Lough—or Black Lake—Castle, and had sensed some kind of menace. According to legend, the lake next to the castle is home to a female ghost who, if glimpsed, is supposed to be a harbinger of death. Afterward, Sophie decided to return to Paris on December 24th, a few days earlier than she'd originally intended. That Sunday, she called her husband at 11 P.M. and had what he recalls was a "convivial" conversation.

At ten o'clock the next morning, a neighbor found Sophie's body in the lane leading to her house. She was wearing a nightshirt, leggings, and high brown lace-up boots, and had been bludgeoned more than a dozen times with a weapon like a poker or a hatchet. A large stone or concrete building block had been dropped on her head, crushing her skull. There was evidence of a struggle. Sophie was a small woman—only five feet tall—but she had clearly put up a fight: there was blood under her fingernails and she was clutching a clump of hair. Neighbors reported having heard wild cries in the night, which they had assumed were the yowls of mating foxes.

Yet no murder weapon was found, Sophie's house seemed untouched, and there was no indication of sexual assault. It was said that there were two rinsed wineglasses by the kitchen sink (a local *garda* told us later that this was "a bit of a myth") and two chairs drawn up to the radiator. It had been a frosty night and, by the time the state pathologist arrived, twenty-four hours later—having driven the two hundred and thirty miles from Dublin—rigor mortis had set in and it was too late to determine the time of Sophie's death.

The story broke in the Irish papers, with many of the details provided first by a local freelance journalist named Ian Bailey, who was working as a stringer for the Cork *Examiner* and had been one of the first reporters on the scene. But, days later, a woman who'd been walking home from her lover's house near dawn on the night of the murder said she had spotted a man who resembled Bailey washing his boots in a stream. Others noticed cuts and scratches on his head and hands (which he claimed he'd got from killing Christmas turkeys and cutting down an aggressive Christmas tree). There was also a rumor that he'd been seen burning clothes on the morning after the murder. Seven



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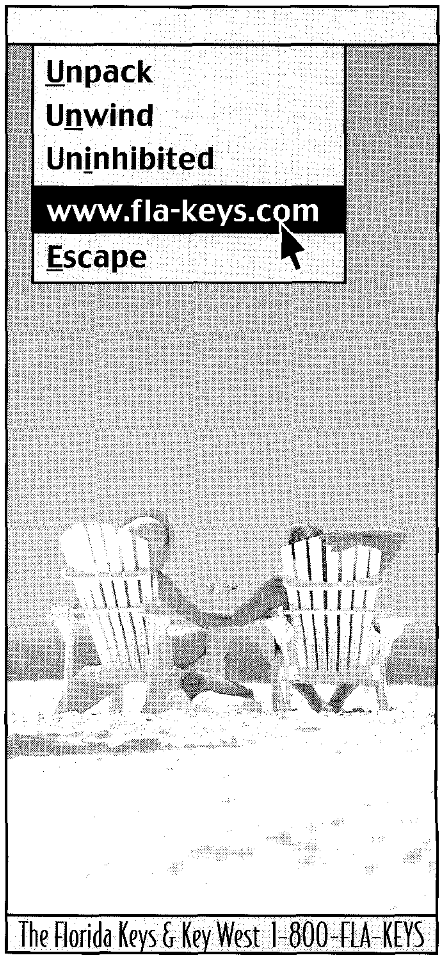

weeks later, the *gardaí* arrested Bailey and his Welsh girlfriend, Jules Thomas.

We knew Bailey, though he had been living in the area for only five years. Born in 1956, the son of a butcher, Bailey had grown up in Gloucestershire, where he attended the Crypt Grammar School and later played for Gloucester's Old Cryptians Rugby Club. His size and strength made him an ideal second-row forward. He started working for the Gloucester & County News Service in 1975. In his reporting, Bailey specialized in espionage stories and gave a lot of ink to the Government Communications Headquarters (G.C.H.Q.)—the intelligence agency in nearby Cheltenham. A journalist who worked closely with Bailey at the time remembers how "he talked big. He was always bursting with ideas for making his fame and fortune." In 1980, Bailey married another journalist, but the marriage soon ended in a divorce that he describes as "acrimonious," and that the various newspaper accounts called "sordid" and "bitter." His ex-wife reportedly told investigators that he had beaten her. In 1991, after brief stints in London and in the United States, Bailey settled in West Cork.

We first met him one night in the winter of 1994. After a lecture at the West Cork Arts Center, Elizabeth and I stopped in a Ballydehob pub. Next to us at the bar was a tall, striking man in his late thirties, with long dark hair, fine black eyebrows, and a snaggletoothed grin. He introduced himself in a crisp English accent and gave us his card, which identified him as "Eoin Bailey." He mentioned his interest in gardening, and we phoned him soon afterward to ask whether we could hire him to take care of our English-style garden, as we were often travelling and unable to do it ourselves. He agreed.

Frequently, as he bustled around in the garden (and what a peculiar historical satisfaction it was for an Irishman to gaze out the window at his English servant!), we would notice that he had hurt himself with a scythe or a sickle—a clumsiness we found surprising in someone who was otherwise so athletic. (Elizabeth speculated that he might have an *Übermensch* complex. I thought he was just awkward.) Once, we had to find Mercurochrome and bandages to stanch the blood. Bailey also smoked heavily, and I can hardly think of him without seeing his eyes narrowed against the smoke of his hand-rolled cigarette.

After he had been working for us for almost a year, Bailey showed me his collected works—scraps of songs and poem-ballads—and I encouraged him in his writing. There was a glimmer of talent there, but it needed a level of discipline which he seemed unprepared to give. He had made a minor reputation for himself, reciting poetry and banging the bodhran—an Irish goatskin drum—at O'Sullivan's Pub, in Ballydehob, and he seemed to prefer the immediate gratifications of the pub's indulgent audience to the tedious, concentrated work of a serious writer. At the annual Irish Seanachie—a storytelling festival—on Cape Clear Island, Ian Bailey transformed himself into Eoin Bailey or, sometimes, O'Baille. As he described it in one poem, "The tall Eoin Bailey, he chipped in his bit, / with his poems on life he proved a big hit."

On one occasion, he borrowed a typewriter that had been gathering dust in our house since we'd switched to computers. I worried later that I might have lent my typewriter to Raskolnikov, but I felt a vaguely paternal affection for Bailey back then, and saw him as an older version of the troubled young men I had dealt with as a teacher. I also felt a kind of abashed concern for him as someone with high aspirations but modest gifts: there, but for the grace of God, et cetera. Above all, I saw him as a victim of the English class system, a butcher's son educated at a "good" grammar school where he learned to read Latin but lost his social moorings, who craved acceptance in the more bohemian society of West Cork.

My "Collected Poems" were published in the autumn of 1995, and Bailey came to a reading in Cork, an occasion that was somewhat eclipsed by torrential rain. Elizabeth and I took shelter from the storm at a pub on the way there and heard a collective groan as the O. J. Simpson verdict was announced on the evening news—our introduction to the idea of murder as an international media event. After the reading, there was a launch party, where Bailey mingled easily with the assembled literati in a round room overlooking the River Lee, the setting of Spenser's "Epithalamion."

That Christmas, Bailey and Jules Thomas invited us to dinner in their remote farmhouse, which stands on an expanse of rugged land called Lioscaha ("the Fairy Fort"), in a region affectionately known as the Prairie. It was a cold night, the sky black and starless, but they welcomed us enthusiastically. Jules put a homemade pâté on their big wooden dining table, alongside chunks of toasted and buttered home-baked bread. A handsome woman in her late forties, Jules is tall and slim, with a slender, olive-skinned face, dark eyes with pronounced pouches under them, and straight, honey-colored hair. She is a painter of land- and seascapes, which are conventional but skillful in their composition. She has lived in West Cork for more than twenty years and her love life has been mildly untraditional, but eccentric behavior is generally tolerated here, at least among the expatriates.

Her three daughters joined us at dinner. The middle daughter was a fledgling artist and she showed us her portfolio. A darkly beautiful eighteen-year-old with large brown eyes, she had her mother's Pre-Raphaelite face. She was warm and courteous, but we sensed a certain unease between her and Bailey. During dinner, the youngest daughter complained that the Christmas tree had not yet been brought into the house. At first, Bailey placated her with an indulgent smile and continued eating, but when she persisted he got up abruptly, left the house, then lumbered back in with a large tree shivering under his arm, scattering needles across the floor.

Bailey continued to work for us through that winter and the following spring. He started leaving us little notes, addressed with whimsical grandiloquence, "To the Bard, John, and the Lady, Elizabeth," usually on the subject of our lush garden: "I came up on Thursday, the only dry day of the week—I gave the grass a thrashing." When we were away in March, we received a St. Patrick's Day card in which he reported, "You lost a couple of branches in the storms—but nothing you would notice." It was obvious, though, when we returned a few weeks later, that the garden had been neglected: the grass

WEDDING THE LOCKSMITH'S DAUGHTER

The slow-grained slide to embed the blade
of the key is a sheathing,
a gliding on graphite, pushing inside
to find the ribs of the lock.

Sunk home, the true key slots to its matrix;
geared, tight-fitting, they turn
together, shooting the spring lock,
throwing the bolt. Dactyls, iambics—

the clinch of words—the hidden couplings
in the cased machine. A chime of sound
on sound: the way the sung note snibs on meaning

and holds. The lines engage and marry now
like vows, their bells are keeping time;
the church doors close and open underground.

—ROBIN ROBERTSON

was tangled and knee-high, the boughs unpruned, weeds encroaching on herbs and flowers. We learned from our former housekeeper that Bailey and Jules had broken up. Then he wrote us a different kind of letter, still grandiloquent but painfully vulnerable as well: “Dear John, *A chara*”—Gaelic for “friend”—“It is under very sad and tragic circumstances I write to you and it is difficult to know where to start. On May 2nd, Jules and myself were coming back from a party—I was driving and an argument broke out. It ended in a fight—we had both been drinking and were very tired. I unintentional [sic] hurt Jules, and her daughter called the guards. . . . [I]t's all quite awful—Jules is deeply upset—neither of us in spite of what has happened want to part and I love her stronger than ever. . . . Please don't think to [sic] badly of me. I never intended to hurt hurt [sic]—it was the drink and I am now resolved to abstinence.”

Jules was indeed hurt. She had been taken to Bantry General Hospital “with her eye hanging out,” according to a neighbor, and needing reconstructive surgery on her jaw. Jules later told us that Bailey had suffered a blackout that night, caused by the abundance of poteen, or moonshine, he'd drunk. Distilled in cabins or cow byres from grain or potatoes, the local poteen can be as pure as vodka or as lethal as a glass of vitriol. She did not press charges against him, although the *gardaí* told us she could have. Meanwhile, Bailey took shelter with a friend in nearby Skibbereen, convinced (correctly) that he would eventually be back together with Jules. Then he telephoned to ask whether he could continue to work on our garden. We were torn. We had been horrified by the violence of the attack and were concerned about the extent to which his emotional instability might affect us in the future. But we also felt that he was genuinely contrite and ashamed. In the end, we agreed to let him come back.

Once or twice he came with another man, and because late summer and early autumn were warm that year they worked bare-chested, brandishing hooks and sickles to crop the dense foliage. Bailey would periodically interrupt his work to knock at the kitchen door and ask for a pot of tea. We were reluctant to let him in because his requests struck us as an attempt to insinuate himself again into our house and lives. Once, as he drank his tea, he spoke to us about the beating. At first Elizabeth encouraged him, thinking that if he could confront his shame he might become more responsible. But his face hardened and he began to talk about his “enemies” on the Prairie, the people who were conniving to get rid of him. Jules's daughters, he said, were among them. We noticed

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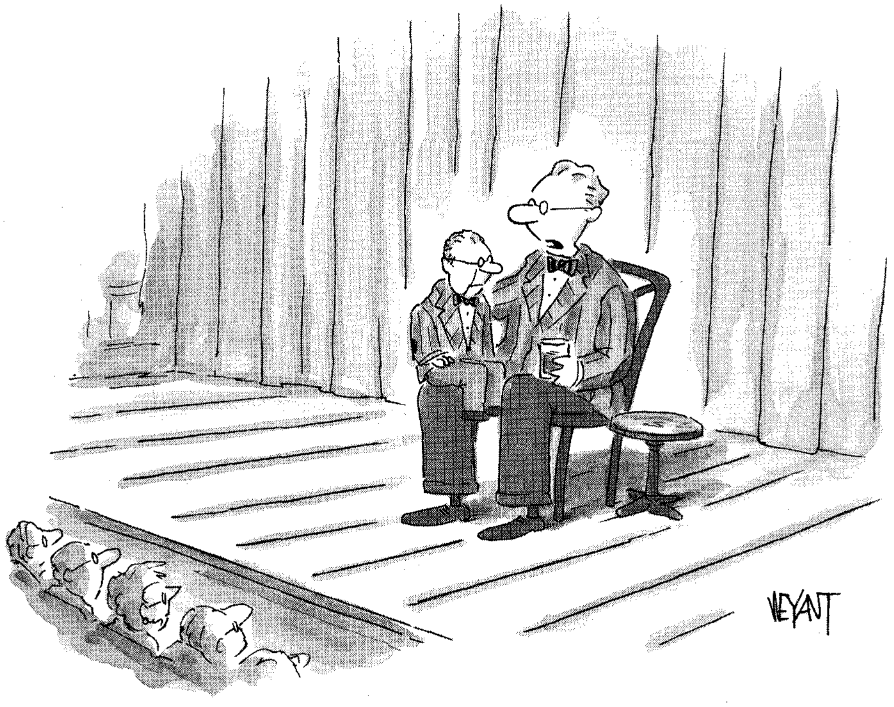
shortly afterward that he had truncated his pledge to renounce drink: presumably beer, wine, and stout had ceased to count.

On the night of December 22nd, Ian and Jules went to the Galley Inn, in Schull. It was just before Christmas and the village was glittering with lights and with the restive energy of the holiday, as distant family members came home from the Bronx or North London, cargoed with duty-free booze and cigarettes. They stayed at the pub until around midnight. (The *gardaí* are more lenient about closing times over the holidays.) When they left, Bailey bought a Guinness to take with him. It was a splendid night, frosty and clear, with a winter-solstice moon overhead, lighting that numinous landscape of ocean and stone. Their old car bounced home toward the Prairie. When they arrived, Bailey, a little drunk and inspired by the hallucinatory beauty of the winter stars, decided to walk over to his studio cottage, some two hundred yards away, and write, while Jules went to bed. This much Bailey told police during the course of his first questioning, in February, 1997.

But the *gardaí* have had to struggle to figure out what happened next, and why. There are no witnesses. According to Bailey, when he finished writing, at one o'clock, he went home to bed. But he could just as easily have driven or sauntered the few miles over the frost-hard earth toward his neighbor's house. He was probably still drunk. Sophie was an influential woman. Did he imagine that she would recognize his genius? It would have been within her power to help his career, to give him a job as a screenwriter. Bailey maintains that he did not know Sophie personally, though he had, of course, seen her once or twice. After one in the morning, she was either preparing for bed or had already gone to sleep. The winter night was long, and stone farmhouses remain stubbornly cold, despite central heating. Would she have welcomed a neighbor's visit? Was she propositioned by the intruder? Did her refusal kindle rage in her murderer? Her husband imagined such a possibility: "They say it was not a sexual crime," he told *Le Figaro*. "But that might have been the trigger. Someone might have wanted to seduce, to rape her. She refuses, resists, and it all goes wrong."

Petty crime is the stuff of a local *garda's* life. The man from whom we bought our farmhouse, for example, had been busted for growing marijuana in the garden, and there is the odd instance of after-hours drinking, drunk driving, or bootleg liquor. But local police had yet to encounter a murder investigation, let alone one that might involve nationals of three countries. Long before the state pathologist arrived at the scene of the crime, the large figure of Ian Bailey had already spent time there, alerted, it seems, by the Cork *Examiner*. Soon, other reporters and photographers arrived, walking around the house, trudging across the grass, leaving fibres of their clothing and strands of their hair everywhere, and the story of Sophie's murder made it to French television before Irish police had even managed to contact her husband. "I was alone in front of my television set trying to understand what had happened," du Plantier said in his *Figaro* interview. "That night at about 10 P.M., my son called Ireland. It was the housekeeper who answered and said, 'I can't talk to you.' . . . Right away, we were treated with suspicion. . . . Finally, it was the [French] Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hervé de Charette, who informed me officially that Sophie had been murdered."

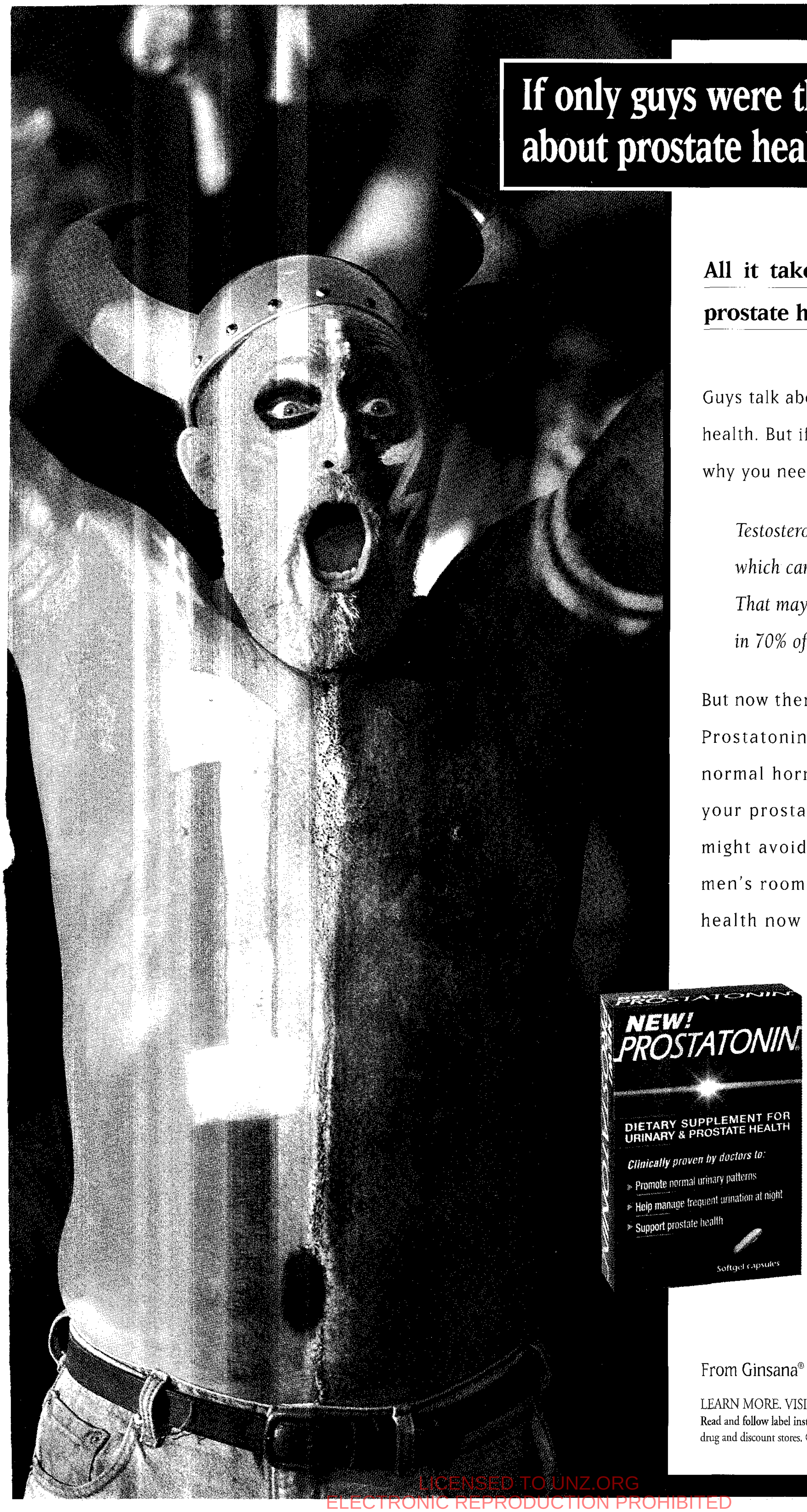


"And now, for your entertainment, I will drink a glass of water while Rempert, here, remains eerily silent."

A few days after the murder, police were contacted by a mystery caller who seemed to have privileged information about the murder. Then, typically, the line was disconnected. (West Cork, at the time, did not have a highly modern telephone service—it was only recently made digital.) The Chief Superintendent appeared on television to ask the caller to call back.

Then the *gardaí* arrested Bailey, telling Sophie's husband, "We've got him. He is in the car." Whatever they had, however, did not stick, and he was released after twelve hours of questioning. "Rarely have police been so sure of their suspicions and at the same time so incapable of finding the evidence," du Plantier said. "I criticize them for throwing out his name with such incredible recklessness. Because if there is one chance in a hundred that he is innocent, it is terrifying."

Bailey continued to cover the murder for the tabloids, at times supplying "breaking news" and displaying an unexpected intimacy with the details of the crime. (This was not so surprising, perhaps, since he had also worked as a gardener for Sophie's next-door neighbor.) For certain articles, he withheld his byline. In one paper, Bailey reported that Sophie had had "a tangled love life" and had been planning to remarry her first husband. Partly at his sugges-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Demystifying The Prostate

Though small in size, the prostate is an important male gland that doesn't age gracefully. Walnut-sized, the prostate sits at the base of the bladder and wraps around the urethra—the tube that carries urine from the bladder. The prostate's main function is to produce components of semen, a fluid that transports sperm. Enlargement of the prostate is relatively common in men over fifty.

What To Expect By the age of sixty, men stand more than a fifty per cent chance of experiencing prostate enlargement. This common condition is called *benign prostatic hyperplasia* (BPH). The good news is the word "benign." The enlargement is not due to cancer, but rather to a benign growth of prostate cells. It is thought that this enlargement is due to a hormonal imbalance caused by a naturual decrease of testosterone. Men may find themselves having to urinate more frequently, often in the middle of the night, with slow, weak, or occasionally intermittent flow.

Be PROactive The best way to know how your prostate is faring is to have an annual consultation with your doctor. During each checkup you'll likely undergo a digital rectal exam—momentarily uncomfortable but amazingly useful as a diagnostic tool. At some point, your doctor may suggest that you take a PSA test as part of your regular health examination to check for prostate cancer.

You can do a lot on your own to minimize prostate problems. Cut down on spicy foods, caffeine, and alcohol—all of which are considered irritants. Strive to maintain a healthy low-fat, high-fiber diet. And exercise regularly to help keep your body and mind in top form. (Your prostate can "act up" from stress alone.)

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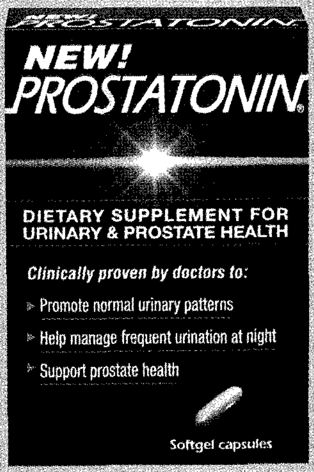
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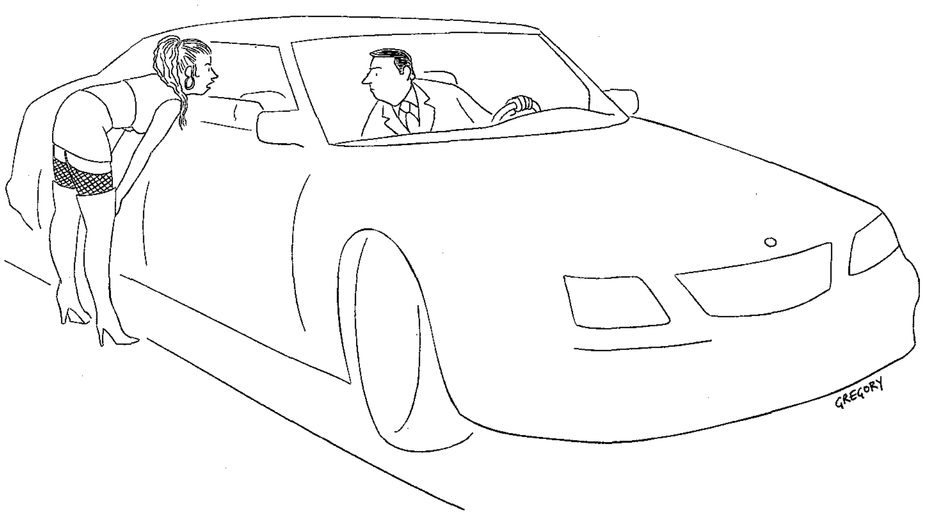
tion, the investigation turned to France: "SUR LA PISTE DE L'AMANT FRANÇAIS" ("ON THE TRAIL OF THE FRENCH LOVER"), as one French daily announced. Suspicion fell briefly on a volatile former lover, with whom Sophie had already had a run-in: he had allegedly tried to strangle her in the Paris Métro. But an inquiry established that he had not been in Ireland at the time of the murder. The *gardaí* also looked into the possibility that it had been a contract killing. Christmas in Ireland is not an easy time to keep track of incoming visitors, and a professional could easily have evaded airport video cameras by arriving on the car ferry into Cork or Rosslare, and then driving west. But West Cork is a complicated landscape and there are few detailed maps and even fewer signposts. A stranger asking for directions to Sophie's house would have stood out.

In the weeks following the murder, the *gardaí* interviewed more than a thousand people, unearthing any number of wife-beaters, dole-exploiters, drug traffickers, and illegal residents. But they seemed convinced that Bailey was their man. There were his strangely knowledgeable newspaper reports and interviews about the crime. And there were those scratches on his head and hands, as well as his history of domestic violence.

That April, the Chief Superintendent submitted a two-thousand-page file to the Director of Public Prosecutions, in Dublin—"two thousand pages of rumors," according to Bailey. Since then, the *gardaí* have not been allowed to speak about the case, and, despite increasingly aggravated pleas, authorities in France, who had initiated their own investigation into the murder, were denied access to this file. The Irish Minister of Justice claimed that releasing the documents would compromise the ongoing investigation—which by that time had kept sixty *gardaí* employed for four months but, to the dismay of the European community, had not resulted in any charges.

Locals continued to discuss the crime, in low voices. Why couldn't the police either charge Bailey or exonerate him? they asked. Surely Sophie would have had foreign DNA on her body, since she had fought off her attacker. Had it been made unreadable by the delay in examining the body? One fact that did slip out was that the blood found under Sophie's fingernails and the hair she was clutching were her own: she must have tried to protect her head against her attacker's hammering blows.



"For an extra fifty bucks, I'll let you show me your Palm Pilot."

• •

In December, 1997, Sophie's family came to West Cork to attend a memorial service at the local church. It was a typically raw and misty morning, and we were a subdued crowd of sixty or so. The choir sang in Irish and many wept as Sophie's aunt, Marie Madeleine Opalka, a dignified Frenchwoman in a wide-brimmed black hat, made a pleasantly accented plea from the altar. Sophie "fully loved your country and its beauty and the kindness of the people," she said. "We want to ask you something from the depths of our hearts. Someone among you may have information or know something—please, please, give it to the police." It was uncannily like the church scene in "The Field," John B. Keane's violent play about a stranger bludgeoned to death in the west of Ireland.

Afterward, we dodged the rain and bundled into the priest's house for coffee with the family, as a *garda* car and a few taut men in black coats waited at the gate. Opalka told me that her niece had invited her to come with her to Ireland the previous December and that she would forever regret having declined. "Thank God Monsieur Bailey has not come today," she added. "Everyone says he is capable of it. If this had happened in France he would be in prison now and people would not be afraid to speak." (It was clear that the French—or Opalka, at least—could not easily conceive of habeas corpus.)

As Opalka implied, Bailey has not hidden from the publicity surrounding his possible role in Sophie's murder. And, if he doesn't actually enjoy his notoriety, he at least remains unruffled by it. In fact, he seems to have found inspiration in his plight. In one poem, entitled "The Prisoner," he even compares his trials to those of Jesus: "a man who slept peacefully / while his disciples panicked."

When Brighid McLaughlin, a reporter for Ireland's *Sunday Independent*, travelled to Schull for an interview with Bailey in July, 1997, he was initially brusque on the phone, announcing that his lawyer had instructed him not to speak about the crime. The same day, however, he appeared in the foyer of her hotel. According to McLaughlin, he had become an expert on the case and discussed theories and countertheories with excitement. Despite his lawyer's admonition, she said, "Bailey does talk. He simply can't stop." The casual way he referred to the murdered woman as "Sophie," as though he had become intimate with her in the aftermath of the crime, was troubling, she said. When McLaughlin asked how he had survived twelve hours of questioning, he replied, "The *gardaí* lost their temper, not me. They seemed to completely forget that they were up against a seasoned journalist. . . . I meditated through the interrogation."

In *Le Figaro*, Daniel du Plantier also expressed his surprise at Bailey's behavior: "The O. J. Simpson story is having babies. . . . Bailey has chosen to court the media. . . . And now he has an amazing new profession: 'I am not the killer of Sophie Toscan du Plantier.' . . . If I were in his place and I were innocent, I would have run away and changed my name and my life."

But Bailey's behavior after the murder seemed to fit his general pattern. From the beginning of his time in West Cork he had been outspoken and flamboyant and had failed to display the tact of a newcomer. His neighbors were often irritated by him, and considered his adoption of "Irish ways" a kind of masquerade. They were offended by his casual appropriation of their culture—the way he blithely used Irish terms without learning the language. It is highly possible that a great many locals, including, perhaps, the *gardaí*, would have been pleased to put him away for this murder simply because they did not approve of him. ("They say I've achieved infamy," Bailey joked to us once. "I say they have it in for me.")

In Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar," the mob pursues a man it believes is Cinna the politician, shouting, "Tear him to pieces; he's a conspirator." When he protests that he is not Cinna the politician but Cinna the poet, the mob responds, "Tear him for his bad verses, tear him for his bad verses." Were we to hang Ian Bailey for banging the bodhran and reciting his own poems? He deliberately kept much of his past in shadow, but his show of social aplomb had often seemed to be a defense against loneliness. Might it not be something of our own insecurity that we recognized in his social swagger and were unable to forgive?

ON January 27, 1998, Bailey's forty-second birthday, he was arrested for the second time—this time by the Dublin-based National Bureau for Criminal Investigation—and some of his belongings were seized. Again, he was released after twelve hours for lack of evidence. According to Irish law, Bailey can be arrested a third time, but only if charges are brought against him. He has been lucky in this regard: if the French authorities had had their way, he could have been charged, jailed, and put under investigation, and the famous Brigade Criminelle might not have been as cautious in its methods as its Irish counterpart.

Sophie's family returned to Cork for the second and third anniversaries of her death to attend memorial services. A small Celtic cross, with Sophie's name, now stands on the ground where she was murdered, and locals often leave flowers there. The house itself remains empty, and it is already a source of fearful legend. Michael Davitt, a poet from Cork who writes in Irish, has written about the crime with Lorcaesque intensity:

Tá teip ghorm as bán
Na n Gardaí ag dúnadh
An bhoithrín go láthair na coire.

The blue-and-white tape
Of the Guards has sealed
The lane to the place of disgrace.

Since Sophie's death, Daniel Toscan du Plantier has not visited the house that he bought for her. He married for the fourth time, in June, 1998, after declaring that "one must respond to death with life," and his new wife gave birth to their child shortly afterward. But he continues to harry the Irish authorities, through his Paris lawyer.

Those authorities have not done much to mend their reputation. Although they appointed an Assistant State Pathologist soon after Sophie's death, when another French couple was found dead last year, this time in North Cork, there was again a delay—this time of thirty hours—before the pathologist arrived on the scene. As a member of the Irish parliament exclaimed, "It certainly doesn't do our image in France any good."

BAILEY maintains his extraordinary sang-froid. He was recently hauled in for drunk driving, fined heavily, and banned from the road for four years. This was perhaps part of an attempt to make him crack, but he and his lawyer are mounting a counter-campaign, contending that the *gardaí* deliberately released his name to the press when such information should have been confidential. His lawyer has also made it clear that Bailey is in financial difficulty, "finding it hard to find work as a landscape gardener."

Since the murder, he has continued to phone me from time to time. On one occasion, he wanted to discuss "The Battle of the Trees," in Robert Graves's "The White Goddess," which has been adopted by New Agers as a holy book. Knowing that I had been friendly with the old wizard Graves, Ian asked me about the lines:

The holly, dark green
  Made a resolute stand;
He is armed with many spear-points
  Wounding the hand.

The image reminded me of the Christmas tree Ian said had caused the scratches on his face and hands the night of the murder.

Another call was to ask me to recommend him for Annaghmakerrig, an artists' colony, the Irish Yaddo. I briefly entertained the fantasy of Ian stalking through the rooms of the colony's vast Victorian mansion with a hatchet in one hand and a list of my critics in the other. Yes, there was the fact that his name was linked to a monstrous murder, but mainly he would have been out of his depth. Poets of the calibre of Michael Longley and Paul Muldoon have passed through Annaghmakerrig, and his work simply didn't measure up to the standard required. He accepted my verdict with seeming equanimity.

When Elizabeth and I called to tell him we were writing about him, he was helpful, giving us the name of his lawyer and of a French journalist he thought had handled the case well. He seemed pleased, adding, "I'm known in England and France, but there hasn't been much written about me in America." He had recited a poem of mine the night before and wondered how I would do as a crime reporter. As we were about to say goodbye, he interrupted abruptly: "I'd better go. If I don't put the parsnips in the oven, Jules will kill me."

Then, in early summer, we attended a benefit for Kosovo refugees at the Galley Inn. (The Irish are always good at mustering support for the victims of war or natural calamity—thanks, perhaps, to the haunting memory of our own famine.) Night after night, we had been gazing at news images of sorrow and terror, so the cheerful, smoky pub was at once incongruous and soothing. As Elizabeth and I were moving through the crush toward the front door, Ian and Jules walked in. We were immediately struck by how much Ian had changed. He seemed heavier, with a slower walk. His face was pallid, and he had cropped his long black hair. Jules, however, looked poised and polished. Her hair, tinted a new, deep gold, was stylishly cut, and she had painted her lips a flattering dark red. But there was a wary look in her eyes. She talked briefly with Elizabeth about her involvement with the local benefits for Kosovo. As Ian was working his way to the back of the pub, we stopped him to discuss this article. He told us that he didn't want his photograph taken. "The matter is closed," he explained. "It's in the past now, and I want to put it behind me."

As he announced this, people in the bar around us stared at him and murmured to one another. It was clear that the matter was not closed as far as they were concerned. And the *gardaí* are sustaining their investigation, despite the frustrating absence of forensic evidence, hoping for a breakthrough—or, perhaps, a confession.

There remains the possibility of Ian's innocence in this seemingly motiveless crime. What must it feel like to be surrounded by such implacable suspicion if one is not guilty—to be the classic scapegoat?

AND how will it all end? Another former gardener of mine, Kevin O'Mahoney, had a theory about what one Irish Prime Minister referred to as "blow-ins"—foreign settlers in Ireland. "Mental dwarfs we are for them," he said; they see the Irish as simple-minded and easily managed. Bailey has run rings around his interlocutors and he has summed up the case succinctly: "No witnesses, no murder weapon, no forensic evidence, no motive. It will take a long time."

Perhaps there will be no real conclusion, and the cloud that settled over West Cork in the aftermath of the murder will gradually dissipate, leaving only the faint impression of fear and foreboding it brought to a place that had not been similarly sullied for decades. Yet there is something too distilled and concentrated about this story for it to disappear quickly. It seems to be part of a particularly European drama—for which West Cork is only one of many stages.

The village of Schull is certainly not the only remote town to have become the unexpected focus of a much criticized international murder investigation over the past few years. When a thirteen-year-old English girl was raped and smothered in a hostel in the village of Pleine-Fougères, in Brittany, in 1996, the local French police came under fire for not releasing details and for not immediately ordering DNA tests on local men. Like the West Cork *gardaí*, they probably knew little about DNA evidence, apart from what they had seen on television. The girl's parents, who managed to get the chief investigator on the case removed, called for a Europe-wide DNA database that could prevent murderers from escaping by slipping across borders.

In this story, and others, the problems of national identity and the absence of any pan-European police force have become obvious: clashes of legal systems and cultural practices, the tensions within small rural communities that are suddenly flooded with foreigners. When we asked an English friend whether he felt that his Irish neighbors were more hostile now, in the wake of this crime involving outsiders, he replied sadly that the locals were too polite to speak of it, but "their silence is deafening."

Not long ago, I glanced out the window of our farmhouse to see a man in a bulldozer barrelling down our road, the teeth of his machine tearing the flowering hedge. When I hurried out to stop him, he cried, "What do you know, you're just a blow-in!" I had never experienced such xenophobic rancor in tolerant West Cork. I quashed him by rebuking him in Irish—which he didn't understand—but my satisfaction was short-lived. There was a new tension in the air. ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

GANDHI'S DAUGHTERS

India's poorest women embark on an epic social experiment.

BY MARY ANNE WEAVER

It was early September, and I was riding with Chaggibai Bhil, an activist for women's rights and caste reform, and her entourage. We had been visiting the leaders of a feminist group in the village of Ghugra, in the Indian state of Rajasthan. As we left the village square and approached the highway, a group of women suddenly appeared on the side of the road. They waved their arms and called to us to stop. Chaggibai seemed to know who they were, and told the driver to pull over. She leaped out of the car and dashed down a sun-bleached lane. We all followed. Someone shouted, "The police have arrived!" I didn't see any police. Chaggibai, an elegant, handsome woman of forty, swept into a three-story house near the end of the lane. We climbed the stairs to the roof—a large open space accommodating three or four small rooms. Great confusion prevailed. The rooftop was crowded with women in saris and veils, a swirl of bright color. People jostled, shouted, competed for attention. An old woman sat cross-legged on the floor in front of one of the rooms, holding her arms and rocking slowly back and forth, uttering no sound. Before I could ask Chaggibai what was happening, a man—middle-aged, with a dark complexion and wearing an earring—began shouting to someone I couldn't see, "You will burn in Hell!" The mass of women around me surged forward, grabbed him, and held him as he attempted violently to break free. Eventually, a village elder, a massive white turban twirled around his head, appeared at my side and guided me to the far end of the roof. He offered me a chair. "Stay away from the center," he said. "It will get much worse."

After some time, another man came over and told me what had happened here. Sonia lived in this house, he said. Sonia was newly married, and new to the house, which belonged to her husband's parents. It was a sprawling household, in which three generations lived. The fam-

LORENZO MATTOTTI

ily was of the porter caste, and Sonia's father-in-law, a man named Devi Lal, had worked at a nearby gas pump until, a few years ago, he had somehow come into a great deal of money—neighbors speculated that he had found treasure buried on the property. Then he had built this fancy house, with concentric courtyards and latticed doors, and his son had married Sonia, who was fourteen and also of the porter caste, and had brought her here to live.

A month or so earlier, Devi Lal had raped Sonia in her room, a tiny bedroom at the far end of the rooftop. Sonia had apparently told no one—not even her husband—but Devi Lal had left anyhow, on some pretext, taking his wife and Sonia's husband with him. The rest of the household had carried on as if nothing were amiss. Then, two days ago, Sonia had heard rumors that the three were returning. She was terrified, and went to her room and locked the door. Standing on a chair, she tied her veil to the electric ceiling fan and switched it on. She prayed that she would be able to kill herself, but the veil had torn and she fell unconscious to the floor. She was discovered by her grandmother-in-law, Devi Lal's mother, the old woman who was now rocking silently back and forth outside Sonia's door.

When Sonia regained consciousness, she refused to speak to anyone but the grandmother-in-law. She told her about the rape, and the old woman wept. The following evening, as the rest of the household slept, the grandmother-in-law put on her darkest veil and walked through Ghugra's narrow lanes to the home of a woman named Bimlabai, who is a member of the Women's Rights Union. She pounded on the door. Bimlabai's husband opened it. "I want my son punished" was all she said.

Bimlabai and Chaggibai and a dozen or so other women went to Sonia's house and urged Sonia to file criminal charges against her father-in-law. She resisted. Finally, Sonia's grandmother-in-law stood up. "We have no choice," she said. At seven o'clock that evening, led by the grandmother-in-law, Sonia and the others arrived at the village's tiny police station. All of them were veiled. The officer on duty was astonished, but he filled out the formal complaint.

Now, a day later, as I sat near the edge of the roof, the enraged man whom the women were attempting to restrain shouted, "You whore! You will listen to me!" He began lashing out with his hands and his feet, striking the women who held him back. I had never seen a human being act in such a wild, animalistic way.

"Who is that man?" I asked Mr. Gujjar, the village elder who had guided me to my place.

"Nathula," he said. Mr. Gujjar looked away, and then turned back toward me. "He is Sonia's father."

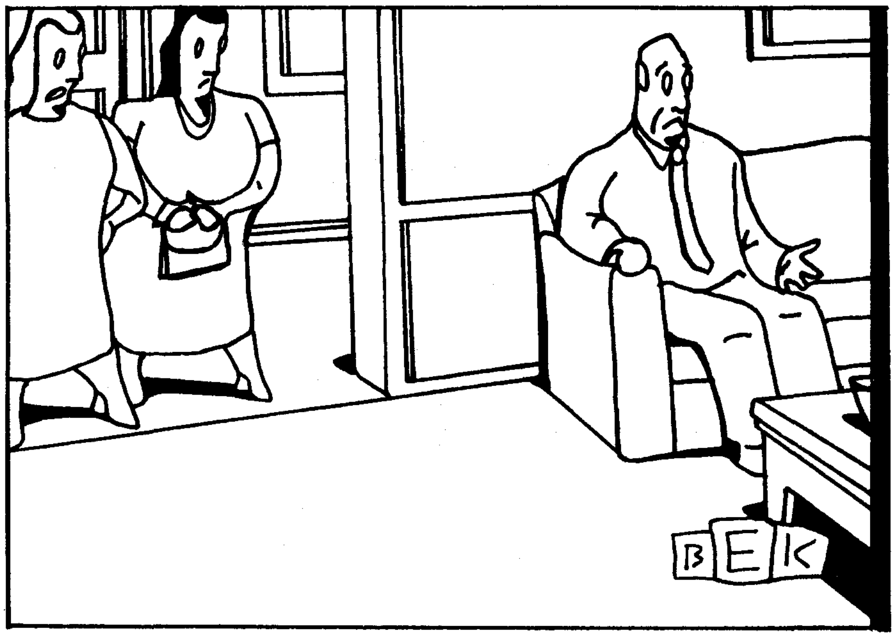
"What is he saying?"

"He is insisting that his daughter kill herself. He is saying that because Sonia was raped the honor of his family and his village has been lost."

After some time, Sonia emerged from her room. She was veiled, and seemed small, but she stood erect. A phalanx of women had gathered around her.

Nathula lunged toward his daughter. "Get back into that room!" he screamed. "Do as I tell you to do! If you don't kill yourself in five minutes, I will do it for you!"

The shouting and the screaming, the pushing and the shoving had become even



"Living brings up a lot of issues for him."

more intense. Chaggibai Bhil was determinedly in the middle of it. I could see her holding Nathula back and trying to reason with him. Then, suddenly, Nathula turned and disappeared down the stairs.

Two policemen who had been downstairs collecting evidence arrived on the rooftop, and Sonia repeated the story she had told them earlier. Then the women of the house, one by one, presented the policemen with the clothes that Sonia had been wearing the night she was raped: a veil, a skirt, a petticoat, and a shawl. With a felt-tipped pen, the women circled the semen stains. And then Sonia disappeared, too, leaving her soiled garments on the floor at the feet of the policemen.

"What will happen now?" I asked Mr. Gujjar. The roof was quiet.

"When we heard about this, we thought we would call a caste panchayat of the village to decide the matter and award punishment. But then the women's organization went to the police station and registered a complaint. A caste panchayat would have been the traditional way." ("Panchayat" is the Hindi word for a council of five.) A caste panchayat is a caste court, presided over by the elders of one's own caste—all, according to custom, men. It can meet at any time, to decide matters ranging from inheritance disputes to violations of ritual caste rules.

"It's a pity about the young girl," Mr. Gujjar said.

Chaggibai Bhil, the situation now defused, joined us and told us that an emissary from Devi Lal was downstairs and had offered Nathula twenty thousand rupees (about five hundred dollars) if Sonia would withdraw her case.

I asked Chaggibai what would ordinarily become of a girl like Sonia in a situation like this.

"Most often, the girl would return to her parents' house, or go into another marriage—if the rape remained concealed," she said. "But this is a far more tragic case. Sonia's grandparents-in-law have now guaranteed her safe custody in this house, but we fear she won't be able to live here for too long. And, with the father against the girl, she can't go home. She will be in disgrace." Chaggibai thought for a moment, and then said, "If there is a caste panchayat, the whole social dynamic of the village will unfold. There will be supporters and detractors of Devi Lal; there will be pressure on the boy to leave the girl."

"What about Devi Lal? Why isn't he held accountable?"

Mr. Gujjar had been listening intently. Now he rested his chin on one hand, and said, "Devi Lal has molested other women. In the fields. He lurks about the village well. He must be punished."

"The burden of shame is always carried by the woman," Chaggibai said. "If she is seen to have blemished the family's honor, her sisters and her brothers will not be able to find suitable husbands and wives. Some seventy per cent of all rape cases in India occur within the family, or, as we say, inside the four walls. Yet, with very few exceptions, men are absolved of any blame. We are trying to change that, but change comes slowly here."

RAJASTHAN, which lies in the desert in northwestern India, is known as one of the country's most conservative states; in the nineteen-thirties, pilots were prevented from overflying the town of Bikaner, in order to protect the modesty of students at a girls' school there. Families often live in walled compounds, sometimes ringed by rifle sights; landlords are brutal, and peasants are serfs; women are in purdah and are veiled; and men enjoy their whiskey and their pigeon and pheasant shoots.

In the colonial period, Rajasthan was a collection of eighteen princely states, known as Rajputana. It was a land of fabulous wealth, of recklessly extravagant maharajas, and of vast, ornate, impenetrable palaces. The princes loved all magnificence and pomp, celebrating the birth of a son with the booming sound of kettledrums, holding ritual pig-sticking contests and elaborate tiger hunts. According to the young Rudyard Kipling, "Providence created the Maharajahs to offer mankind a spectacle."

The royal houses were dominated by the Rajputs, a group of clans of the Kshatriya (warrior) caste, who fall just beneath the Brahman intellectual-priests. Rajputs have dominated Rajasthan for more than a thousand years, and their harsh code of honor and their code of chivalry have often been compared to those of medieval European knights. The Rajputs would fight on against all odds and, when no hope was left, their women and children would march into a burning funeral pyre, in a ritual known as *jauhar*. According to some sociologists, *jauhar* is the progenitor of the far more recent practice of "death by fire," in which brides are burned—largely by their husbands or their mothers-in-law—for being unable to meet additional dowry demands. They are usually set afire in the home of their in-laws (who are usually middle-class), and the family then claims that they died in a kitchen accident. According to figures presented at a recent Harvard seminar, between eleven and fifteen thousand Indian brides die in dowry disputes each year—an increase, over the last decade, of a hundred and seventy per cent.

After Independence, in 1947, Rajputana's kingdoms lost their wealth: the princes surrendered their cash and their property to the new state in exchange for a privy purse (later abolished). But their legacy—of feudalism and patriarchy; of child marriages and arranged marriages; of bride burning and enforced seclusion in purdah—persists even today.

There is a sense of isolation in Rajasthan, which stems perhaps from its desert fastness—it is spread over more than a hundred and thirty thousand square miles—or from its oppressive heat, which, during the summer months, can soar to more than a hundred and twenty degrees. The state's forty-four million people, along with those in the other North Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar, are among India's poorest, its least educated, and its most uncontrolled. Tough and hardheaded, they live according to well-established traditions of caste warfare, lawlessness, vendettas, and blood feuds. The four states are often called the "Hindi heartland" or, more disparagingly, the "cow belt." Only twenty-eight per cent of Rajasthan's population has completed school through the eighth grade; nearly thirty per cent live below the poverty line, which in India means they earn less than a dollar a day. The state's G.N.P. per capita is less than half the national average, and the national average is only four hundred and thirty dollars a year. Eighty per cent of Rajasthani women are illiterate. In one secluded village, called Devra, the villagers like to boast that no bridegroom came there for a hundred and ten years. Why? "Female infanticide," one women's activist told me.

In September of 1987, in the prosperous village of Deorala, some five thousand villagers watched as a young Rajput widow, with her husband's head resting on her lap, sat on a funeral pyre and was burned alive. (The ancient practice of a woman joining her husband when he dies, called *sati*, or "true wife," was abolished by the British in 1829.) The woman, Roop Kanwar, was eighteen; her husband was twenty-four; she was a high-school graduate; he had finished university. After he died—of a ruptured appendix, it seems—she put on the crimson-and-gold sari that she had worn on her wedding day and led the village mourners to her husband's funeral pyre. Bowing her head, she circled it three times in the traditional *parikrama*. Then, in a second, she was atop the burning pyre. (No one knows whether she mounted it voluntarily or was pushed.) Her gold jewelry glistened, the villagers said, as she sat cross-legged, her hands folded, looking serene. Cries of "*Sati!*" suddenly filled the air. The crowd grew frenzied, in homage and prayer. In the weeks that followed, more than half a million pilgrims (including two members of the government) came to pay homage to Roop Kanwar. They knelt and prayed on the spot where she had died, sprinkled it with flowers, burned incense sticks, and smashed coconuts. By the time I and other journalists arrived from New Delhi, Roop Kanwar had been deified. A monument stands in Deorala on the dusty little mound where she died.

Indian feminism, born out of the upheavals that accompanied Gandhi's independence campaign, has been a force, albeit a fledgling and often divisive one, for more than fifty years, but, for all intents and purposes, it bypassed Rajasthan, and village women here, along with others in the states of North India, are largely oblivious of the equal rights that their Constitution guarantees. Only recently have feminist groups like the Women's Rights Union, which grew out of a more broadly based civil-rights group, begun to appear, to complement the efforts of women's-development groups that promote, among other things, education, health, and income-generating schemes. Thus, when the Panchayat Act, as the Seventy-third Amendment to the Constitution is called, was made law, in 1992, it was an epic social experiment. For the amendment not only returned elected local government to all of India's states, in the form of village councils, or panchayats, but, for the first time in Indian history, it reserved for women—many of them from the country's lowest castes—a third of the council's seats, along with a third of the posts of *sarpanch*, or village chief. (The women's *sarpanch* position rotates among villages.) These panchayats, which have nothing to do with caste panchayats, are popularly elected by groups of villages to decide local civic affairs. In the 1995 panchayat elections—the first to be affected by the amendment—more than three thousand women *sarpanches* were elected in Rajasthan alone, including Chaggibai Bhil, the activist with whom I had gone to Sonia's house. "These women are now in their first term, and the results are mixed," a World Bank development officer had told me in New Delhi, before I came to Rajasthan. "But there are success stories all over the country. The more backward the district, socially and economically, the greater the potential impact."

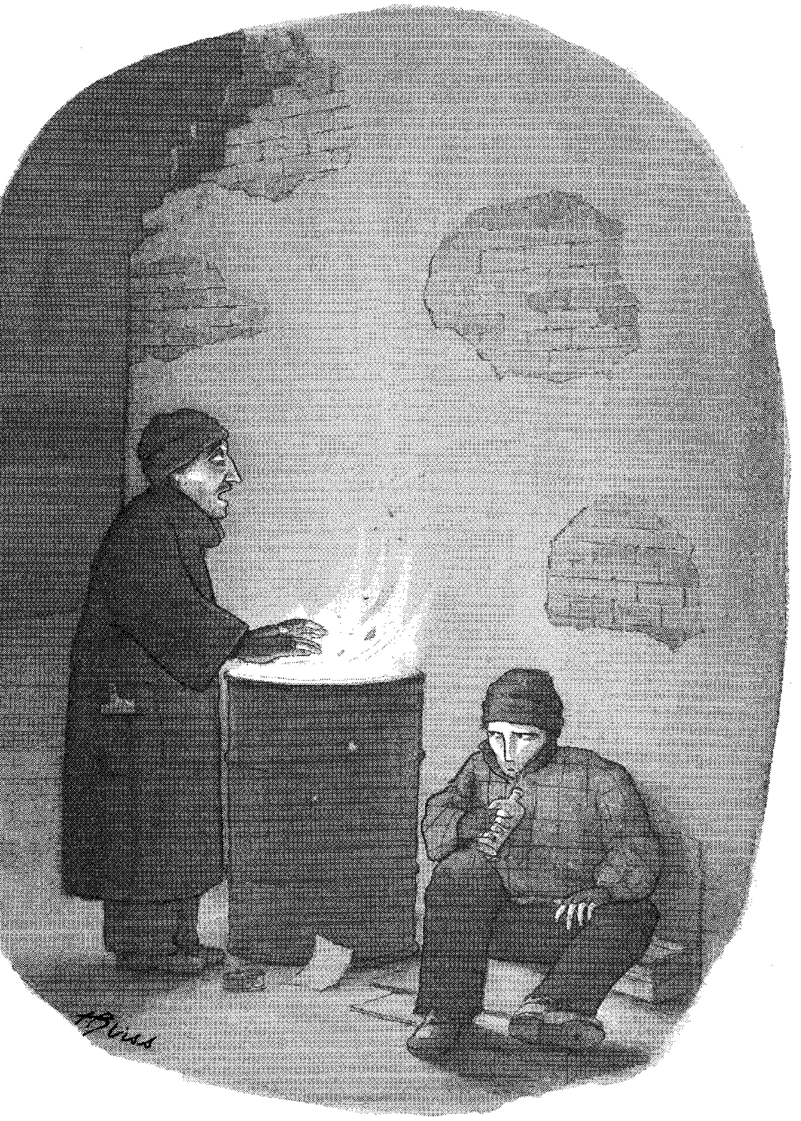
THE day I visited Sonia's house was the day I first met Chaggibai. I had arranged to meet her earlier that morning in the tiny square of Bandia, the village where she lives, but when I

SECRETS OF THE GREAT TELEVISION EXECUTIVES

got there she was nowhere to be seen. My companion, a Roman Catholic nun called Sister Carol, who is also a lawyer and a women's activist, nervously checked her watch. Thus far, the morning had not gone according to plan. Our car had broken down even before we left the nearby district capital of Ajmer; we then clambered into a rickshaw, which nearly collided with a bus. No one whom we were scheduled to meet in the village had yet arrived, and we were already more than an hour late.

Standing beneath a spindly tree in the square's only shade, I watched the life of Bandia lumber by: a glassy-eyed bullock led by a young boy; a skeletal cow, seemingly intoxicated by the heat, wandering down a narrow lane; a group of barefoot women walking toward the village well, their silver ankle bracelets tinkling, their bodies covered from head to toe by long, colorful skirts and diaphanous veils. The temperature continued to rise, and the pre-monsoon wind billowed clouds of dust from the mud lanes into the air. Other than the wind, the silence was broken only by the barking of a dog, somewhere beyond the square.

A motorcycle roared. It was driven by a man dressed in a pair of dark trousers and a white shirt; sitting side-saddle behind him, and balancing a briefcase in her lap, was the *sarpanch*, Chaggibai Bhil. She slid off the passenger's seat; then, with folded hands, in the traditional gesture of greeting, she lowered her eyes, luminous and kohl-rimmed, to the ground. She was not in purdah and wore no veil. Strands of her thick black hair had been tousled from the pins that held it back, and now framed her oval face, dark in complexion and unlined. She wore an exquisite silk sari of bright blues and greens which was embroidered with golden thread. Glass bangles covered one of her arms, and a gold pendant hung from her swanlike neck.



"Love the exposed brick."

A torrent of words spilled out: "I'm so sorry. Where are the others? We've been up half the night. The police...the family..." I had no idea what she was talking about—she was talking, of course, about Sonia, I now realize—and she never completed her thought, or, at least, Sister Carol never completed it for me, as she interpreted from the lilting, colloquial Rajasthani dialect.

Chaggibai then strode through the village square, and Sister Carol and I, accompanied by a lawyer who had joined us in Ajmer and Chaggibai's motorcyclist companion, a distant relative, all dashed behind, past low, dun-colored mud houses, down a narrow dirt lane. The landscape was parched and dusty. When the rains came, it would be awash in mud. We quickly reached our destination: Chaggibai's simple, one-room home.

As she busied herself spreading elaborately colored Rajasthani carpets on the floor, then piled mirrored pillows against the walls, I glanced around the room. It held no furniture except a tall wooden bookcase, which dominated a far wall and was laden with files and papers, cassettes and reference books; aluminum cookware sat on shelves built into an adjacent wall. Perched on cartons in the corners of the room were a radio, a television, a tape recorder, and a sewing machine. Just above the television was a picture of Christ, and, on an adjacent wall, a portrait of Bhimrao Ambedkar, a writer of the Indian Constitution and the most important leader of the people known as untouchables, whom Mahatma Gandhi called Harijans, or Children of God, and who now call themselves Dalits. Born into a caste predestined, among other things, to carry human waste and to dispose of bodies at cremation grounds, Dalits are so low in the Brahmanic order that technically they are not even a part of it. I had been told earlier that a photograph of Ambedkar—who escaped his station by converting to Buddhism, as hundreds of thousands of other Dalits have done—hangs in every lower-caste home.

Legally, India has no untouchables. The category was abolished shortly after Independence, and has been abolished several times since, in scrupulously worded legislation passed by Parliament. They are now known as "scheduled" tribes and castes—a term of art introduced by the British during colonial times, when a quota of positions was first allocated to them. Here in the villages, they are known simply as outcasts. Whatever the nomenclature, there are two hundred and five million of them. If you are "scheduled"—as Chaggibai is—you do, in a sense, benefit from a government system of positive discrimination. You have your own members of Parliament, a quota of college places and of government jobs. Yet the best of official intentions has had only marginal effect.

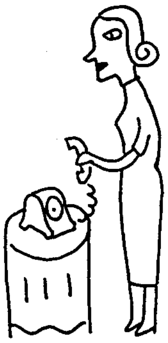
In Indian villages, practically everything continues to turn on caste—a refined form of apartheid which is believed to have been introduced in India some thirty-five hundred years ago by pale-skinned Aryan invaders in order to keep the dark, indigenous Dravidians in their place. The Bhil tribe, to which Chaggibai belongs, is the oldest of the aboriginal groups comprising India's original inhabitants, and her ancestral family became servants of Aryan princes and Aryan kings. She was born in the remote and inhospitable village of Satavria, which is so tiny it appears on no map, and is little more than a cluster of mud huts with conical thatched roofs. Villagers live mainly from the land—which they do not own—and from grazing goats and other livestock. Chaggibai, of course, is a Dalit, as nearly a quarter of India's billion people are. With few exceptions, caste distinctions have determined the social, economic, and occupational status that she will have for her entire life. Caste etiquette specifies what she and her family may eat, the ritual of her marriage ceremony, the length of her sari and what ornaments she may wear, whether or not she may draw water from the village well, and through which door she may enter a temple—if she may enter it at all. Caste even determines whether or not a man may carry an umbrella in the villages of India.

As we sat sipping tea, I asked Chaggibai, "What made you stand for the post of village chief?"

"Anger."

Many of the new female *sarpanches* are merely stand-ins for ambitious husbands, who had not been permitted to contest the elections once the seats for women were reserved. So I asked whether Chaggibai's husband had given her his support. A brittleness entered her voice. "I have not been married for many years," she said. She discovered when she was fourteen that her husband had another wife, and from that point, she said, she found him "vastly irritating." He had also protested when she entered a nurses' training school. In the final analysis, she said, "I simply objected to him."

To the distress of her family and her friends, Chaggibai had left her husband's house—or was banished from the village by her in-laws, according to another account—and she walked, for fifty miles or so, with her two young daughters across the desert and through the fields until she reached Bandia. She was twenty-two; that was nearly eighteen years ago. She knew no one in the village, but she hoped to find work as a day laborer, in the marble quarries in the nearby town of Kishangarh.



Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Indira Pancholi, a leading activist of the Women's Rights Union, to which both Chaggibai and Sister Carol belong. She was accompanied by her husband, Ravi Hemadri, and their little girl, and announced, without explanation, that we must proceed immediately to the nearby village of Ghugra. As everyone assembled in a car or on motorbikes, I asked Chaggibai how old she had been when she married.

"Ten," she said.

As *sarpanch* of Rasulpura (where the panchayat sits), Chaggibai ruled over four villages, including Bandia; the majority of her constituents were from higher castes. She is the only daughter of a landless family whose fate depends on a landlord's whim. But she left all that behind when she walked away from her earlier existence in the "real India," as Gandhi called village life. I puzzled over exactly where Chaggibai fit.

According to a 1992 study, conducted by a number of women's groups involved in implementing an ambitious government scheme known as Mahila Samakhya, or Women's Equality, the typical Indian village woman receives her inheritance at birth: to be regarded as a burden because she is not a son. She comes from a peasant family that owns less than an acre of land, or from a landless family, as Chaggibai did. She can neither read nor write, though she often would like to do both. She has rarely travelled more than twenty miles from the village of her birth. If she falls ill, she believes it is because of evil spirits lurking in the trees. Her sole worth lies in producing sons and working in the fields—for a meal and the equivalent of fifty cents a day. She is born into a caste, a geography, and a poverty from which there is no escape. Once she marries, at an early age, her life is fixed; her future becomes her mother's past.

We left the highway and bumped along a dirt road, from which the village of Ghugra began to define itself. It consists of some three hundred families, living in whitewashed adobe houses, and it is considerably more prosperous than Bandia, and far less somnolent, with noisy lanes and clusters of storefront shops. A shaded cement platform encircled a well, and I watched men assembling on it; astonishingly large turbans swathed their heads. Others sat cross-legged on charpoys, argued and gesticulated, and smoked acrid-smelling cigarettes or water pipes. The few women in evidence were indistinguishable behind colorful ankle-length veils, which were handsomely decorated with gold, silver, and copper coins, a testament—along with the heavy silver jewelry displayed from head to toe—of the dowries they had brought to married life. Chaggibai pointed to one woman who was walking down a lane, dressed in a plaid skirt of dark colors and wearing a saffron veil. "You can tell by her skirt," she told me. "She's a Jat"—a member of an upper farming caste.

We finally reached our destination, a one-room house with a rickety porch. The room had no furniture, like Chaggibai's house, and it was stifling. A carpet covered the floor, and bolster pillows were stacked against the walls. A large crimson drape was tacked to one wall: "Headquarters of the Women's Rights Union," it announced. As Indira Pancholi, with more courage than reason, I thought, attached a bare wire hanging from a ceiling fan to a fuse box on the porch, a half-dozen or so other women who had agreed to meet with me arrived. Most were in their thirties and forties; perhaps half of them wore veils, but none of their faces were covered. Two of them led young daughters by the hand. Once a cascade of sparks from the fuse box was brought under control, we all settled ourselves on the floor.

Then, in a ritual of village life, glasses of water were passed around the room, and I noticed that none of the women allowed the rim of their glass to touch their lips. I discovered later that this, too, had to do with caste, in one of its most inhibiting forms: the pollution associated with "untouchables."

Indira Pancholi was studying me from across the room.

"To which feminist groups do you belong?" she asked.

My God, I thought. Can this be happening in Ghugra? "None," I said. I was embarrassed.

"And what is your world view?"

I could think of no response. For lack of anything better, I said, "I'm a journalist."

The women began murmuring among themselves.

After some diplomacy, conducted largely by Ravi and Chaggibai, we all relaxed and I was excused for having missed the feminist revolution in the United States, since I had been living abroad with my husband, also a journalist.

The conversation moved quickly: from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's expected gains in the upcoming national elections to his chief opponent, Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born inheritor of the once formidable Nehru-Gandhi dynasty; from Roop Kanwar to Bhanwari Devi, another grassroots activist, who had been gang-raped in a not too distant village in 1992, after she led a campaign against child marriages. A judge in the state capital of Jaipur had acquitted the men allegedly involved, because, in his view, rape is committed only by teenagers, not by upper-caste, middle-aged village notables, such as those accused. But Bhanwari Devi—who in 1995 attended the United Nations women's conference, in Beijing—persisted, and her case is now pending before the Jaipur High Court.

As the conversation continued, Chaggibai's own story began to unfold. In 1995, when it was announced that Rasulpura would be one of the panchayats with a woman *sarpanch*, she had been approached to stand, by an assortment of both women and men. She had become well known in the area as a women's activist, as a school administrator, and as a participant in the Women's Equality program. She was intelligent, high-spirited, forceful, and well liked. But she was a Dalit, had no money to wage a campaign, and had little liking for "the Godfather," as she called him, of the panchayat. That was Charan Singh, a higher-caste farmer and, by local standards, a man of some wealth, and of political connections. He had led the panchayat for as long as anyone could recall.

"I was reluctant in the beginning," Chaggibai said. "I felt, as a Bhil woman, that I would be discriminated against, that I would be shown no honor, and that at meetings I would not be permitted to sit on a chair with the other women and men but would be made to sit on the floor. From the very beginning, I knew there would be problems." She smiled. "But I decided to stand anyhow."

Politics in Rasulpura, like politics in all villages, especially in the north, is caste politics, and the four villages over which Chaggibai would rule were dominated by the upper Rawat caste, a community of landowners who were traditionally priests, and formed a part of the Rajput warrior élite. They made up sixty per cent of the population, and they overwhelmed the ten per cent of the villagers who were Dalits and tilled their land. There was also a scattering of other castes, both intermediate and low, and, unusual for Rajasthan, a significant number of Muslims.

When the villagers finally accepted the fact that Rasulpura had to elect a woman as *sarpanch*—and a lower-caste woman at that—much of the male Rawat élite supported Chaggibai. "At least she was literate," a Rawat named Mohinder Singh said to me. "And she had no husband to interfere." It was clear that Mohinder and his friends had expected Chaggibai to be their marionette. In the end, the Rawat vote split between the supporters and the detractors of Charan Singh, and Chaggibai won the election by two hundred votes.

"At the first village assembly after my election," Chaggibai said, "Charan Singh conducted the meeting, and he refused to allow me to speak. I had canvassed all the women and all the Dalits from my villages to attend, and more than four hundred people came. Charan Singh was

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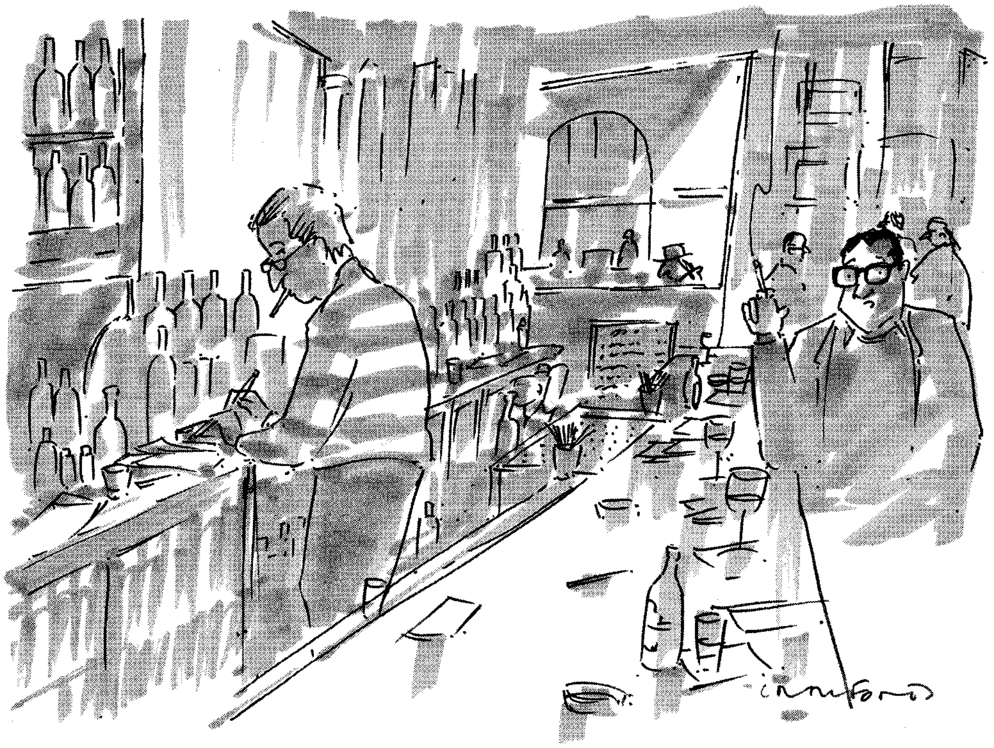
SHOWCASE BY FIROOZ ZAHEDI

THE SOPRANO

First, there was Peach Melba, then came Chicken Tetrazzini. Now, in the grand tradition of naming culinary dishes after operatic superstars, there is La Diva Renée, a new dessert that the New York chef Daniel Boulud has unveiled in honor of the American soprano Renée Fleming. A mélange of chocolate, hazelnuts, and amaretto cookies in a sauce of clementines, the dish has a chocolate top printed, appropriately, with music from Fleming's next opera at the Met, "Der Rosenkavalier," in which she sings the Marschallin. (It opens on January 20th.) Like the confection, Strauss's heroine is complex and bittersweet, at once regal and vulnerable. These are qualities that Fleming's sumptuous soprano, which can both bloom and melt in a single breath, possesses, and many operagoers expect her Marschallin to rival that of a onetime teacher of hers, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf.

"This is a character that can only get richer the more you sing it—it needs a lot of layers," Fleming says. No opera star today is more multilayered than Fleming herself. Raised in Rochester, New York, where she grew up with "horses and music—a good combination," she commands a repertoire that encompasses a half-dozen languages and spans three centuries, from Handel's "Alcina" to André Previn's "A Streetcar Named Desire." In February, she gives two other performances in New York—first as the title character in Donizetti's bel-canto shocker "Lucrezia Borgia," and then, with Julie Harris, in an evening of music and words devoted to Emily Dickinson. Meanwhile, she hopes to make a jazz recording with Illinois Jacquet, Charlie Haden, Kenny Barron, Pat Metheny, Wayne Shorter, and Shirley Horn. As anyone who has heard her Ellington repertoire knows, Fleming has a jazz technique to rival the late Sarah Vaughan's—one that was honed in college, where she had her own trio. William Christie, who conducted her in "Alcina," was dazzled by her flair with the Baroque style. All that jazz, he said, made her Handel come alive.

—Charles Michener



"I'm supposed to be someplace downtown right now, sucking the air out of the room."

furious. When he was *sarpanch*, all the meetings were held in secret, mostly at his home." The crowd was so large that it spilled out of the panchayat building and into the village square and its tiny lanes; some people even perched in the trees. When Charan Singh realized how many women had shown up, his anger turned to rage. "He began shouting," Chaggibai went on. "He said, 'Why are women required? Go back to your villages at once!' And all the women left."

Chaggibai and her growing army of women and Dalits began to mobilize. The women went from door to door, some under the protection of husbands or sons; some were in purdah, others were not. Since the point of panchayats is to give villagers control over local development schemes, planning, and spending, Chaggibai was determined to find out precisely what the villagers of Rasulpura considered their greatest needs. The villagers, from all castes, responded, largely enthusiastically.

"Look at what I inherited." Chaggibai pulled a sheaf of papers from her briefcase and waved them in the air. "Unfinished projects. Pending projects. Chaos. Anarchy."

She then proudly enumerated some of her own accomplishments: she had covered a number of village drains (which had posed acute health hazards, she said) and repaired a school building and some roads; she had completed the panchayat building—so that meetings could now be held in open session—and a small irrigation project. She also refused to sanction the embezzlement of village funds.

"She did away with all the unnecessary frills of the panchayat," Sister Carol said.

"She even stopped tea-drinking," another woman chimed in.

"Tea!" Chaggibai flailed her arms, and her voice began to rise. "Charan Singh and his friends each drank, on average, five cups of tea every time they met—that means sixty-five, *sixty-five* cups of tea, with four spoons of sugar each." She quickly calculated. "Do you have any idea how much that costs? It costs the equivalent of ten books for children in school."

Not surprisingly, Charan Singh and his protégés on the panchayat were becoming increasingly alarmed. The duty of controlling Chaggibai was delegated to the deputy *sarpanch*, a Rawat named Mohan Singh. He owned a liquor shop just down the road, in the center of the village of Bhoonabai—a bustling trading point that forms part of the Rasulpura panchayat and sits on the main highway connecting Ajmer to Jaipur. According to existing law, Mohan Singh's liquor shop was illegal—it should have been on the outskirts of the village, not in the heart of it.

Since 1992, tens of thousands of women all across India had gone to war against alcohol. Their rage over drunken husbands, and the wife-beating and empty coffers that ensued, led to an Indian "Lysistrata." The women demonstrated and protested, and many went on strike: no shopping, no laundry, no cooking, no sex. A number of state governments became alarmed and banned alcohol.

But the women of Bhoonabai were timid; over half were still in purdah, and all were poor. They were glimpsed in the village only from time to time, returning from the fields or from the village well, balancing bundles of firewood or earthen jugs of water on their heads. Then slowly, almost imperceptibly, they began to come out. Chaggibai organized a small demonstration against the liquor shop, which led to a larger one. Scores of women had soon multiplied into hundreds, from all the nearby villages and towns, and eventually they blockaded the highway, transforming it into a sea of color as they sat cross-legged, hidden behind their veils. Others, who were accompanied by equally outraged village men, stormed the liquor shop and smashed its bottles with their broomsticks.

At this point, Mohan Singh and Charan Singh and the other Rawats, who had variously tried to flatter or coerce or otherwise control Chaggibai, must have known that they had no alternative: she had to be removed. Her fortunes were not helped when, during a training camp last summer for panchayat members, she and Mohan Singh got into a screaming match over the fate of his liquor store. As state-government officials looked on, stunned, Mohan Singh and his men attempted to assault her, Chaggibai said. She filed a criminal complaint.

A month or so afterward, Mohan Singh—a prosperous man—invited nine of the panchayat's twelve members to accompany him on a pilgrimage to the sacred temple of Ramdeora, near the medieval city of Jaisalmer. They prayed and they feasted, and the following day they returned to Rasulpura and, contrary to all rules of procedure and form, held a meeting without inviting Chaggibai and two of the other women members of the panchayat, or even informing them of it. Without debate, they passed a no-confidence motion against Chaggibai.

When I asked Chaggibai what she would do now, she told me that she had filed a petition against her removal in the Jaipur High Court. Other cases had been registered on her behalf, by the Women's Rights Union, by an association of Dalit groups, and by a civil-liberties group. Chaggibai's lawyers have argued that when a no-confidence motion is brought new elections must be called or, failing that, the new *sarpanch* must be of his or her predecessor's gender and caste. Even though she was now, in effect, a defrocked *sarpanch*, Chaggibai continued to fight; and the villagers of Rasulpura who had elected her, men and women alike, still considered her their village chief. They came to her, as they had come before, bringing their problems and seeking her advice. Chaggibai Bhil continues to take up the issues of her villages, but instead of going through the Rasulpura panchayat—where sixty-five cups of tea are being served again, under the munificent eye of the new *sarpanch*, Mohan Singh—she goes directly to the offices of district officials in Ajmer.

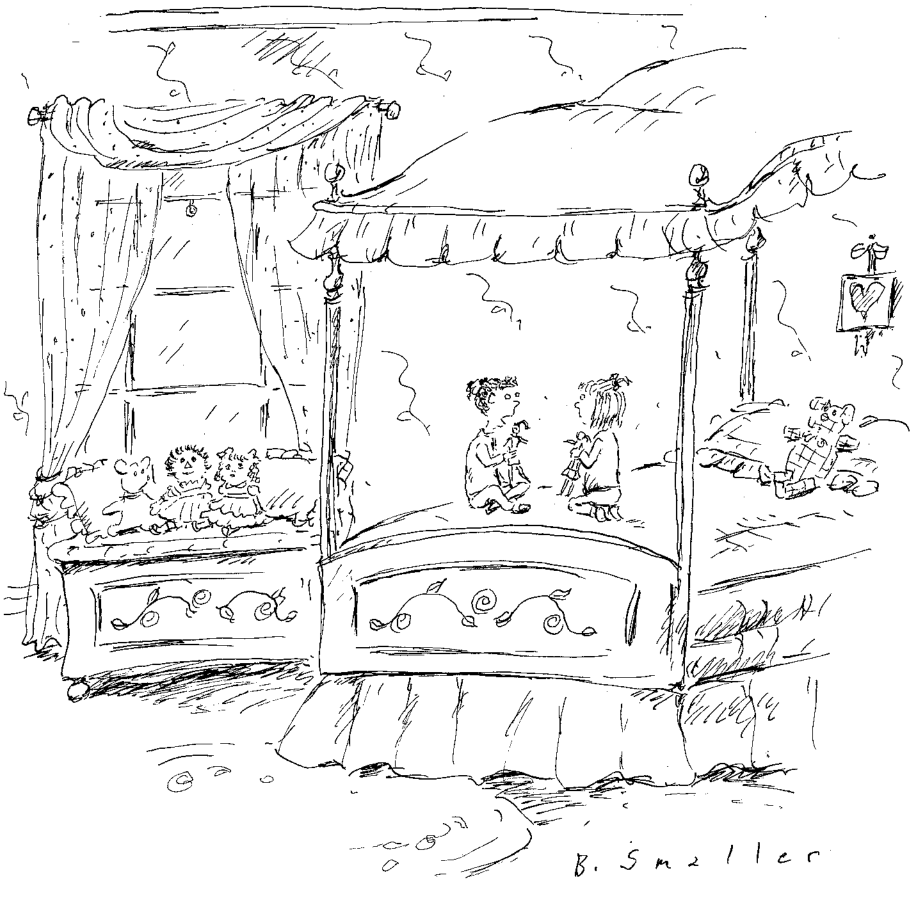
"From the beginning, I knew there would be problems," Chaggibai said. "But I never imagined that it would come to this. They simply couldn't tolerate a woman. And, above and beyond that, the panchayat is dominated by non-Dalits, so they couldn't tolerate me doubly. If I had been their puppet, as they expected me to be, none of this would have happened. But I refused."

Dr. Kumud Sharma is a development expert, a sociologist, and the director of the Center for Women's Development Studies, in New Delhi. When I returned there from Rajasthan, I called on her. A vivacious woman in her fifties, she is an enthusiastic proponent of women's participation in grass-roots government. Now that I had seen what was happening in one of the most traditional areas of Rajasthan, I was curious to find out how the experiment in panchayats was working elsewhere. "It's a bit premature to draw any sweeping conclusions yet," Dr. Sharma said. "These women are still in their first term, less than five years, and from what we know thus far the results have been mixed. However, that being said, when one million women are unleashed into the political process each election year there is bound to be an impact. They are out there now: many of them had never even stepped out of their doors before. And the panchayats are proving to be formidable training grounds from which they can pose a challenge to centuries-old, entrenched hierarchies."

She told me about a study that the center had recently completed in a hundred and eighty panchayats in three of the most patriarchal Hindi-heartland states: Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. Although a third of the women elected—both to the panchayats and as *sarpanch*—were found to be proxies for husbands or sons, or for godfathers like Charan Singh, the other two-thirds were learning the business of government and exercising power themselves.

"The study exploded several myths of those who said that the Seventy-third Amendment would not contribute to women's empowerment," Dr. Sharma went on. "First, the myth that women would merely be proxies who would stay at home while their men would attend meetings and speak on their behalf. Then, there were others who claimed that most women would be passive, that they could not articulate, let alone dominate. Still others argued that mostly upper-caste and upper-class women would contest, or that only women with political connections would stand. On every level, the study proved just the opposite. Not only were a mere third of the women acting as stand-ins but almost half of those elected were from the lower and the scheduled tribes and castes, with no political connections or experience. More than forty per cent came from households below the poverty line. As for passivity, against often tremendous resistance from men these women are standing up, especially those with some background in women's organizations or development work.

"Caste proved to be a very strong factor in the elections," she continued. "But not in the way one might expect—the lower-caste women, while they frequently lacked education and the ability to deal with bureaucracy, had no inhibitions about leaving their homes. For centuries, they,



"Sometimes having to have the happy childhood my parents never had is just too much of a responsibility."

and others before them, have worked in the fields. It's the upper-caste women—and they are the educated ones—who live under the strongest constraints. It's a curious contradiction within the village hierarchy. Upper-caste women don't work, and, as a consequence, they were not willing to contest. But, at the same time, they don't like these lower-caste women ruling over them." She smiled. "The sisters are not very unified."

LAKHPAT SINGH is a small and pleasant man, with a well-chiselled face and a taut build—a testament, perhaps, to twenty-five years he spent as an Army soldier before retiring to his village, a number of years ago. The village is Daula, in the northern state of Haryana, and Singh, at sixty-nine, is serving his third term as *sarpanch*. I wanted to hear a male *sarpanch's* views on women in government.

Daula had little to recommend—most of my Indian friends described the entire state of Haryana as "the pits"—but a journalist friend of mine, K. K. Sharma, happened to own a farm there. So one Sunday morning K.K. and I set out from New Delhi for the thirty-mile drive. When K.K. bought land here, fifteen years ago, the village had no cars. Now there were more than a dozen. The villagers never drove them, but it was fashionable to own one. Economically, Haryana was one of India's most prosperous states, and its rate of women's literacy was higher than the national average, of thirty-eight per cent. Although its caste dynamics were subtle, and did not take a violent form, they were nevertheless rigid and omnipotent. In ninety per cent of Haryana's panchayats, women were not permitted to sit with men. Daula had three women on its panchayat, but the post of *sarpanch* had not been reserved for a woman yet.

Lakhpat Singh greeted us warmly in the garden of his home. Then he said, "You've come to discuss the ladies, I suspect. They don't function very much. A man can put pressure on people; he can travel; he can talk easily to his constituents, and settle internal disputes. A lady can't. A man can say anything to a woman. A woman can't say anything to a man. Our three ladies hardly ever attend panchayat meetings; the male members of their families come. More or less, we simply never consult them. You must understand," he continued with some emphasis, "these ladies were chosen only because we *had* to have three women. They have no objection to whatever we do."

"To which caste do they belong?" I asked.

He seemed somewhat startled. "We all belong to the Thakurs, a sub-caste of the Rajputs," he said.

"Can I meet one of the women?"

"Why?" he replied. "I've already told you they're merely housewives."

But, being a gracious host, he called one of his grandsons into the courtyard, and asked him to summon a woman named Surupidevi—who, he explained, was marginally better than the other women in taking initiatives. Her husband was also an influential man, the retired keeper of Daula's revenue books.

As we waited for Surupidevi to arrive, Lakhpat Singh shook his head. "Gradually, change is happening. A lot of change, in fact. Women are now permitted to do much more than they ever did before. For example, they go to Sohna"—the nearest town—"alone, and they do their own shopping. The joint family is breaking down."

He considered what he had said, and almost immediately unsaid it. "Purdah is the most effective control we have on these women. For example, they can't sit on a chair with men. They must sit on the ground."

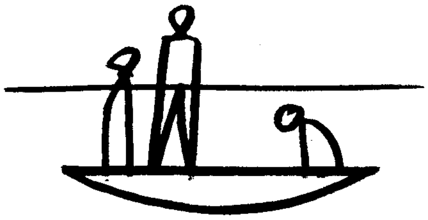
Before he could continue, Surupidevi arrived. A woman of medium height and build, she was sixty-four, a grandmother, and a housewife. She wore a freshly starched cotton sari of bright pink and white, and the first thing she did after greeting us was to settle herself comfortably in a chair.

I asked her why she had been so inactive in panchayat affairs.

"Who told you that?" she inquired, mischievously.

Lakhpat Singh shifted uneasily in his chair.

"I have done a great deal, within the limitations imposed on us," she went on. "Women in the village can't approach the *sarpanch* directly, so they come to me with their problems, and I relay them to him. The village has set up a center to generate income for women, by making candles and textiles. I help find employment for village women there. If a husband and wife quarrel, I arrange for the husband to be brought before a women's committee." She stopped to take a breath, and glanced around the courtyard. A sprinkling of the *sarpanch's* male friends, their faces cast in stone, sat erect on straight-backed chairs. Surupidevi fell silent.



I therefore thought it prudent, for the moment, to direct my question on husband-and-wife disputes to the *sarpanch* himself.

"Yes," he conceded, "the ladies did help us out on that, after the panchayat failed." He went on to explain that it had been discovered that a farmer in Daula was polygamous, and had mistreated his second wife. The women's committee had forced him to pay her maintenance, the equivalent of twelve dollars a month.

I was startled. "Is polygamy permitted in Hinduism?" I asked.

"No," he replied. "This was a unique case."

Surupidevi perked up. "There are three other such cases in the village," she said.

"Well, it's illegal in the Army!" Lakhpat Singh said.

I asked Surupidevi how her husband had responded to her being a member of the panchayat.

"She didn't want to stand. Her husband forced her to," Lakhpat Singh answered for her.

"We only sat at home. The men did all the campaigning," she said.

"Ladies *can't* campaign," he interrupted. "How can you go around the villages in trucks and jeeps, criticizing the ruling *sarpanch*?"

"I wouldn't have criticized *you*."

Lakhpat Singh smiled.

"Is it true that women in Haryana can't vote until they're married?" I asked.

"No," he said.

"Yes," she said.

"By the time a woman reaches eighteen, when she's eligible to vote, she's already married, because everyone is married by then. So, your question is a non sequitur," Lakhpat Singh said.

"Your daughter is over eighteen, and she's not married. Can she vote?" Surupidevi politely asked.

Lakhpat Singh thought for a moment. "No," he said.

He then left the courtyard to take a telephone call, and the other men followed.

MARRIAGE COUNSELLOR

"July, 1967. An antiques fair in Peekskill, New York. A gorgeous eighteenth-century French armoire for an unbelievable three hundred dollars. What's-his-name here says, 'This we don't need.' Are you getting the picture?"

• •

The moment Lakhpat Singh had disappeared, Surupidevi said, "All-male panchayats are a thing of the past. We're in modern times, and reservations for women are a good thing. Otherwise, we'd be where we've been for years: zero, kicked around by men."

IN mid-October, Atal Behari Vajpayee, of the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, began a new term as Prime Minister of India. For the second consecutive time, India's voters rejected the political domination of their country by the Congress Party, which had ruled them for nearly half a century. The party, presided over by Sonia Gandhi, a woman of scant political experience, was humbled as never before. She had campaigned largely on the martyrdom of her assassinated husband and her assassinated mother-in-law: the Prime Ministers Rajiv and Indira Gandhi. It was also an election in which India's Dalit parties, for the first time, had reached for power of their own. And, unlike the Congress Party, they had not been humbled.

At about the same time that Vajpayee was being sworn in, Chaggibai Bhil learned that the Jaipur High Court had ruled that it considered her case against her dismissal to be frivolous. Two of the court's judges rejected the case out of hand, as they rejected cases filed by six other women *sarpanches* against their removal in questionable no-confidence votes. Chaggibai and the other women are now planning to take their case to the Indian Supreme Court. Meanwhile, the villagers of Rasulpura continue to regard Chaggibai as their *sarpanch.*

Some days later, in the village of Mangliawas, near Ajmer, a caste panchayat met to decide the fate of Sonia and Devi Lal. It sat late into the night, and outside the panchayat's doors shoes and sandals were stacked against the walls. Shoes are considered to be so impure in the Brahmanic order of things that they are always removed before entering a place of respect. In some villages, a Dalit must remove his or her shoes before walking in front of an upper-caste home.

The notion of justice being meted out by a caste panchayat has often been met with a skeptical response. But, as Mr. Gujjar had told me that afternoon as we sat on the roof of Sonia's house, this was the traditional way. Chaggibai had insisted at the time that the old must meet the new, and that a caste panchayat could be considered just only if its members agreed to hear the views of elected panchayat members and, in cases like Sonia's, those of women's groups. The police in Ghugra had been even less convinced that a caste panchayat could achieve any measure of justice, and, a few weeks before it met, both the father-in-law, Devi Lal, and his wife, on returning to the village, were arrested. (They have now been released on bail, and are scheduled to stand trial imminently.)

Just after midnight, the doors of the panchayat hall opened and, one by one, the caste elders slowly filed out. Everyone rushed to the village square—Chaggibai and Bimlabai, Indira Pancholi and all the women of Sonia's house, including Sonia's grandmother-in-law.

"We have reached our decision," one of the village elders announced. "Nathula, Sonia's father, and Devi Lal and his son will be banished from the community. They will be socially ostracized for the rest of their lives. All of you must boycott them: you may not share food with them; nor may you have any social alliances with them." Anyone who violated the ban, he warned, would be fined the equivalent of nearly five hundred dollars—more than the annual G.N.P. per capita of India.

He looked around, and then he said, "As for the girl, Sonia, please bring her before us tomorrow at first light."

As dawn broke over Mangliawas, Sonia arrived, surrounded by the women from Devi Lal's house. They entered the hall, and Sonia stood silently before the white-turbaned men.

"Our ruling is simple," one of the old men said. "We command you to strike your husband and your father with a shoe."

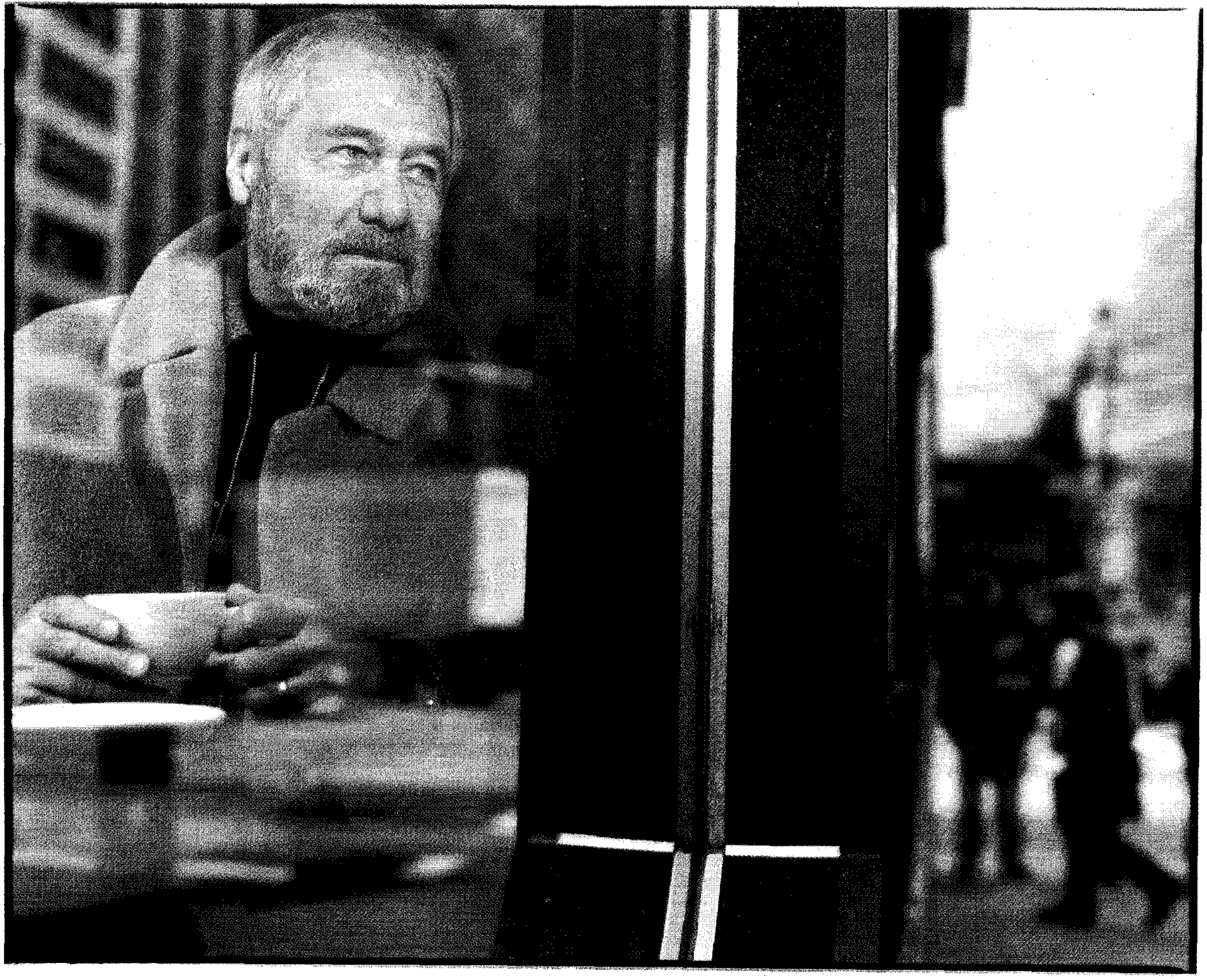
Tears came to Sonia's eyes, and to the eyes of the other women of Devi Lal's house, and they left the building and streamed into the village square, where all the other women waited, as did all the village men. Nathula and Sonia's husband were in the center of the square, being held by their arms. Sonia walked toward them, calmly and deliberately, and she picked up a shoe and hit both of them on the head. Then she walked away, her honor restored. ♦

PROFILE

THE POET OF PULP

How Ed McBain made the precinct house a respectable place.

BY PETE HAMILL



SABA

FOR decades, I've had a secret literary pleasure: the novels of Ed McBain. As far as I know, they're not taught; they're not part of the canon. But, in some strange way, McBain and I have been pilgrims together on a long journey through what he calls the big, bad city; the novels are as woven into my life as the Lexington Avenue express. No matter where I live, part of me is always in the 87th Precinct.

I began reading the McBain novels in the late fifties, when I was starting out as a writer. The first one I read was "The Mugger," which started this way, from inside the head of a criminal:

> The city could be nothing but a woman, and that's good because your business is women.
>
> You know her tossed head in the auburn crowns of molting autumn foliage, Riverhead and the park....She is a woman, and she is your woman, and in the fall she wears a perfume of mingled wood smoke and carbon dioxide.

The paragraphs that followed were a rhapsodic and gritty evocation of the city and its female nature, written in a shade of purple; today they seem more than a little ripe. But when I first read them, in 1958, they pulled me swiftly into the story and kept me there. Unlike so many of the books I was reading—by Hemingway, Fitzgerald—these novels were not set in Pamplona or Antibes; they were about the city where I lived. I stayed up most of the night reading the short novel, moving through the city with the detectives of the 87th Precinct.

As an apprentice, I admired McBain's solid paragraphs and the absence of waste or decoration. I admired his dialogue, too. McBain understood that a specially tuned ear was essential to defining the people of the city that he called Isola. He showed that speech on a printed page depended upon rhythmic approximation, and not the exactitude of a transcript. Yet McBain wasn't asking the reader to pause and take note; he was asking the reader to keep reading. Everything in McBain's work served the story.

In time, I learned that Ed McBain was a pseudonym for the mainstream novelist Evan Hunter, who had established himself in 1954, with "The Blackboard Jungle." (Hunter's many other credits include the novel of fifties suburban adultery "Strangers When We Meet" and the screenplay for Alfred Hitchcock's "The Birds.") But for me the McBain novels came first. They usually started with a corpse—on the floor, on the street, in a snowbank—and then moved swiftly into answering the classic questions about how the body got there. The process of unravelling the mystery was never mechanical, and the novels were at once surprising and familiar. They were about a world I knew as a New Yorker and a newspaperman—they took me to places that I'd seen a dozen times as a young reporter—and, like any great journalist, McBain gave life to that world through details. In "Long Time No See," published in the late seventies, a building superintendent named Reynolds lets two detectives into a third-floor apartment. A blind woman is lying on the floor beside a refrigerator:

> Her throat had been slit, her head was twisted at an awkward angle in a pool of her own blood. The refrigerator door was open. Crisping trays and meat trays had been pulled from it, their contents dumped onto the floor. There were open canisters and boxes strewn everywhere. Underfoot, the floor was a gummy mess of blood and flour, sugar and cornflakes, ground coffee and crumpled biscuits, lettuce leaves and broken eggs. Drawers had been overturned, forks, knives and spoons piled haphazardly in a junk-heap jumble, paper napkins, spaghetti tongs, a corkscrew, a cheese grater, place mats, candles all thrown on the floor together with the drawers that had contained them.

The victims, of course, are not always dead, as in "Blood Relatives":

> The front of her dress had been ripped, and she tried to hold the torn sides of the V closed over her brassiere as she ran through the rain. It had been raining since ten o'clock. The rain was neither cruel nor driving now; it had changed to a gentle drizzle that sent mist drifting up from the pavement. In the distance, the green globes of the 87th precinct shone through the rain and through the mist.

In McBain's city, the precinct house is an outpost of civilization. To be sure, the cops of the 87th Precinct are not saints. Their private lives are often untidy. There are racists among them, and fools and schemers, too. They would not be surprised by the cases of Abner Louima or Amadou Diallo. But such aberrations would outrage most of them; even the most racist of McBain's cops, Fat Ollie Weeks, recognizes that there are lines he cannot cross. McBain's cops work in a city where it would be entirely plausible for a crackhead to hit a stranger in the head with a brick. And without cops, McBain implies, there would be no city at all. In that sense, his novels speak for conservative values. In the end, we have cops because we have bad guys. The cop, like the novelist, can bring sympathy, even compassion, to his pursuit of even the most atrocious killer.

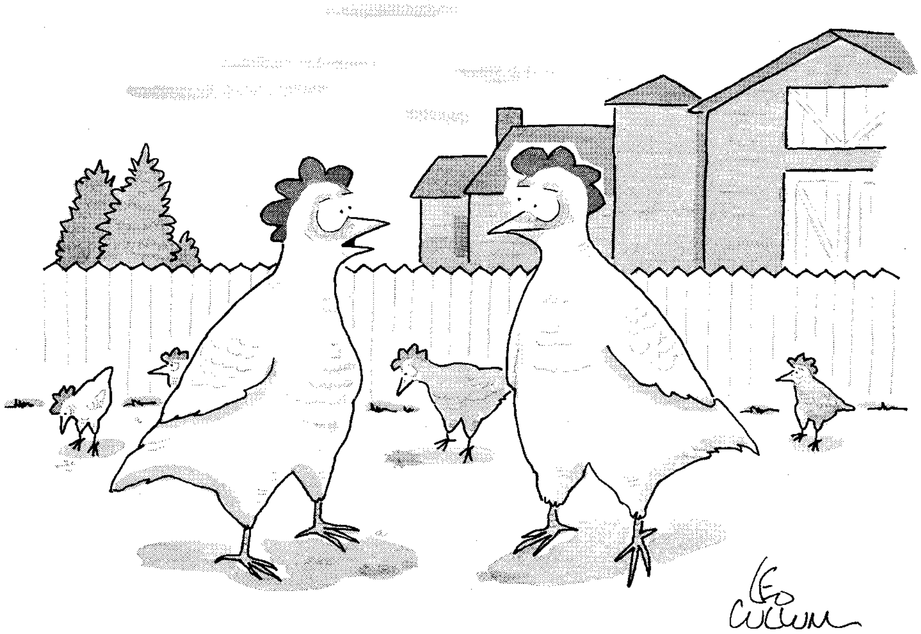
The lead detective of the 87th Precinct novels is Steve Carella, but the job of detection and pursuit is done by a team that includes detectives, forensic specialists, lab technicians, psychologists, and a cast of informants. This reflects actual police work, and it also follows the novelist's plan. From the first of the McBain novels, Hunter's design was to feature what he calls a "splintered" hero.

In clumsier hands, splintering the tasks and talents of the squad could lead to novelistic anarchy. That never happens in McBain's narratives, which are carefully focussed on the quest for understanding and resolution; they are as simple as myths. Carella, who is usually at the center of each novel, is the best detective on the squad—intelligent, skeptical, proud of what he knows, modest about what he doesn't, at peace with the bad hours and the lousy pay. He knows that he must work with all the other cops. They include Bert Kling, whose doomed romantic life provides a continuing narrative; Detective Meyer Meyer, a patient, serious, and gutsy cop who is Jewish and prematurely bald, and whose sense of humor helps him through the inevitable bad patches; Cotton Hawes, a big, handsome, sometimes reckless bachelor with many women in his life; and Artie Brown, the only black man on the squad, who often struggles with bigotry, black and white. In minor roles there are women cops, police brass, and technicians.

The characters, in short, are part of an ensemble; as in life, the stories may be overlapping, unconnected, and parallel. In McBain's 1971 "Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!," there are (if I've counted accurately) fourteen plot lines. If this sounds familiar, it's because the concept has been appropriated in various ways by television cop shows like "Homicide" and "N.Y.P.D. Blue." In "Hill Street Blues," the main policeman was named Furillo, in what I took to be an homage to Carella.

HUNTER did not invent what came to be known as the "police procedural" (a label believed to have been coined by Anthony Boucher, who reviewed crime novels for the *Times Book Review* from 1951 to 1968). He doesn't like the term; it makes the novels sound as if they were about the mere clerking of crime. There were police detectives in American letters well before the first McBain novels began appearing, and readers and writers of crime fiction were also aware of Georges Simenon's Inspector Jules Maigret, the pipe-smoking French detective who was featured in more than seventy books written between 1931 and 1972. But McBain's novels were more realistic than their predecessors, in that he used a full range of the modern tools of detection. Above all, they were much better written. And, beginning with the first McBain, "Cop Hater," published in 1956, the novels moved beyond the archetype of the Master Detective, a literary tradition that included Maigret (although Simenon and McBain resemble each other in several ways: productivity, craft, professionalism). McBain's people were

In McBain's big, bad New York, the heroes aren't private detectives like Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade—they're everyday cops warding off threats to the family of the squad and the wider family of the city. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.



"Explain something to me. Are 'boned' and 'deboned' the same thing?"

• •

cops—real cops. And when a crime is committed in the real world cops, not amateurs, are called in to deal with the mess.

This had not usually been the case in American crime fiction. During Prohibition and the Depression, the private eye—Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe—had come to dominate the popular imagination. Most urban police departments—along with big-city political machines—had been corrupted by the easy money that flowed from the bootleggers during the twenties; in many towns during the Depression, police power was marshalled against unions, leftists, protesting war veterans. The private eye was not an agent of the state, and thus had a special appeal for the children of Irish, Jewish, and Italian immigrants—that is, of people who came from countries where the police were an oppressive force. Many Americans grew up, as I did, wary of ever going to the police for help.

But readers and writers of crime novels were changed by the experiences of the Second World War and Korea. In the armed forces, they learned that winning a war required the skills of many specialists. For such men (and many women), the platoon was the central unit of survival—and of eventual triumph—in the same way that the family was the basic unit of civilian society. The men of the 87th Precinct are described in the early books as veterans, and they form their own platoon. They are also a kind of family.

The precinct's job is to ward off threats to the family of the squad and the wider family of the city. The city around the detectives changes; they do not. In more than forty years, Carella has aged only a decade. In the fiftieth 87th Precinct novel, "The Last Dance," being published this month by Simon & Schuster, Carella's fortieth birthday is behind him, barely.

But, if the elasticity of the calendar reminds us that we are reading fiction, McBain's picture of the dense, layered, sometimes scary city suggests that his achievement is much bigger than its fifty parts. In fact, I read this latest McBain as if it were a piece of a larger project: a multi-part novel about New York in the second half of the century. That grand novel is now about three million words, and it does not seem too much of a stretch to compare it to, say, Eugene Sue's "The Mysteries of Paris," in which crime and misdeeds and the pursuit of the guilty are used to illuminate a great city during a particular era. Sue—and Balzac—took readers to places where nobody else could go. In his own way, in our time, so does Ed McBain.

Over the past four decades, McBain has taken us into boardrooms and crack houses; into glossy law offices, the Broadway-like theatre (which he revisits in "The Last Dance"), import-export firms, the music business, publishing, network television, art galleries. He has made vivid the lives of strangers, various and bizarre. He has challenged us to think about the precarious value of human life in a huge American city—a place populated by blind beggars, youth gangs, predatory rapists, Jamaican drug posses, con men, blackmailers, race hustlers, kidnappers, burglars, and stool pigeons.

Along the way, the reader can see how the city's language changes: the topical references change; the immigrants change; the names change. There are seven daily newspapers in the early novels; by the time of "The Last Dance," there are three. One can trace the arrival of television, drugs, and racism. Almost from the beginning, the books are imbued with a nostalgia that is the permanent curse of so many native New Yorkers. In a city where all is in flux, New Yorkers of every generation carry around the memory of a lost city. In 1977, Carella (in "Long Time No See") was feeling nostalgia even about murder:

> There used to be a time when most murders started as family quarrels resolved with a hatchet or a gun. Find a lady dead on the bathroom floor, go look for her husband. Find a man with both legs broken and a knife in his heart besides, go look for his girlfriend's husband, and try to get there fast before the husband threw her off the roof in the bargain. Those were the good old days.

Still, McBain is too much of a New Yorker to become maudlin. Near the end of "The Big Bad City," the forty-ninth 87th Precinct novel, published last year, Carella sits with the black detective, Artie Brown. Carella is remembering old cases, riffing about cops who died and bad guys who were punished:

> Jesus, remember the times? I remember them all, Artie. I remember all of it, all of it. Every single minute. It goes by too fast, Artie. I'll be forty in October. Where did it all go, Artie?"
>
> He looked up.
>
> "Artie?" he said.
>
> Brown was snoring lightly.

SEVERAL times in the past year, I met with Evan Hunter in his apartment, on the twenty-second floor of a building in the East Seventies. He is seventy-three but talks with the rest-less energy of a much younger man. He is lean and trim, with thinning hair and a neat beard that is scratched with gray. He usually wore a sweater, slacks, and loafers, and was at once relaxed and focussed. He used to smoke, but three heart attacks have cured him of the habit.

Hunter has published more than ninety works of fiction, including four children's books, and his publisher says that he has sold more than a hundred million books around the world. He has won the Grand Master Award from the Mystery Writers of America and the Diamond Dagger from the British Crime Writers Association. He's had good luck with film. Both "Strangers When We Meet" and "The Blackboard Jungle" became films, and the director Frank Perry made a lovely small movie from Hunter's 1968 novel "Last Summer." In 1963, Akira Kurosawa transformed an 87th Precinct novel called "King's Ransom" into a thriller called "High and Low," starring Toshiro Mifune; it has been remade three more times in Japan, and Martin Scorsese is planning to produce another version.

"It's always been an odd kind of success," Hunter told me. " 'The Blackboard Jungle' was a blockbuster success, but I was hardly attached to it—it wasn't my movie. 'Strangers When We Meet' made a lot of money, and I got to write the screenplay, but, still . . . 'Last Summer' was a good film, but it came in second to 'Easy Rider' that season. I always felt like an outsider in Hollywood. I always felt like I was going out to do a job, putting on the leather gloves, and, you know, get the money and go home." In 1997, Hunter published a short memoir, "Me and Hitch," about working with Hitchcock. The laconic ninety-page book is devoid of illusions, either about the British director or about Hunter's own career in Hollywood.

Hunter talked in a rueful way about other unsatisfactory parts of his writing life. "The experiences I had in the theatre never resulted in a hit play," he said. "So I never felt part of that inside theatrical community, where you call Orso's and reserve three tables and rush right over. I never felt that." He shook his head and shrugged. "And I never felt the sort of acceptance one gets from the literary community. It's as if Evan Hunter got dismissed along the way. And, with Ed McBain, I've never felt quite accepted in the mystery writers' community, because they go, 'He's Evan Hunter slumming.' It's a strange thing. I never felt that niche that would make me feel enormously comfortable."

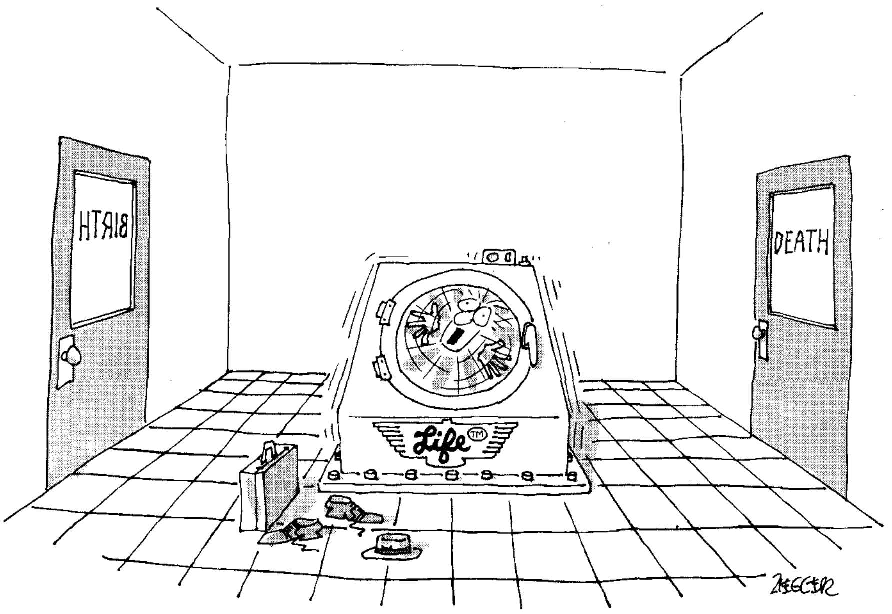
Hunter was married for the third time in 1997. His wife is an elegant, dark-haired Yugoslavian woman named Dragica Dimitrijević, and he has dedicated both "The Last Dance" and its predecessor to her. (His second marriage, to Mary Vann, ended several years ago.) On this morning, Dragica was out shopping. Their dog, a five-year-old Maltese, Sasha, began barking at a cable that was whipping around outside the window. Hunter shushed the dog, then stood up and explained the harmlessness of the cable to Sasha. He paused at the window. The East River was below us, and a barge was moving sluggishly on its opaque surface. Queens was on the right, the Bronx in the distance. "It's a beautiful view, isn't it?" he said.

THE beautiful view was due north along the edge of Manhattan to East Harlem, where Hunter was born, in 1926, and where he lived until he was twelve. His name at birth was Salvatore Lombino; he was the only child of Charles F. and Marie Coppola Lombino.

"My father was a substitute letter carrier," he told me. "In those days, when you joined the Post Office department, you had to be a substitute for a certain amount of time before you became a quote regular unquote. But when the Depression started they froze the list, and he was stuck, earning eight bucks a week. We moved in with my grandparents. My grandfather was a tailor, and he made all my clothes. I had tailor-made suits when I was eight years old. I was the best-dressed kid in the slums."

The family lived on 120th Street between First and Second Avenues, two blocks from Sal's grandfather's shop. "There were people from all the immigrant groups," Hunter said. "There was a German lady who lived on the third floor, Jewish people elsewhere in the building. It was a very quiet neighborhood at that time, in terms of crime. Although it wasn't just an Italian neighborhood, there was an Italian feeling to it. When I went to Italy for the first time, in 1949, and I got to Naples, I heard the same sounds I heard in the streets when I was growing up. The same street sounds, the peddlers . . . There was no violence then. There were no street gangs. Sure, it was divided. There was East Harlem, where we lived, and then you crossed Lexington Avenue and you were in black Harlem. And I used to go with my father all the time to the Apollo, way over on the West Side, with a largely black audience. We used to get out of there at midnight and walk back home and there was never a problem. Never."

He has a great affection for his father. Clearly, Charles Lombino was responsible for encouraging his son's creative side. "My father had a band,"



Hunter went on. "He played drums. He supplemented his income by playing weddings, engagement parties—he met my mother at an engagement party where he was playing. He had bands called the Louisiana Five and the Louisiana Rhythm Kings. He had a band called the Phantom Five, where they all came out in white hoods. They must've looked like Ku Klux Klan members. That's how he met my mother. He took off the hood and said 'Hi!' "

Hunter smiled broadly, remembering Charles Lombino in the years of the Depression. "He was a very smart man," he said. "Totally uneducated, but very inventive and creative. He started businesses all the time. He started something called the Ace Bureau of Clippings—the A.B.C. He'd look in newspapers and find an article, say, about somebody whose wife had just given birth to a baby boy. He'd clip it out. Then he'd send a letter saying, 'I have some articles about you in the newspaper, would you be interested in having them?' And they paid him for the clippings. It was like a clipping service, and he was doing it out of his own kitchen. He started a pool hall. Failed. He started a crochet-beading business. At that time, in the twenties, all the women were wearing crocheted beaded dresses. They were high fashion. But then they went out of fashion—and that failed. The only thing that paid any money was his band."

In 1938, the family moved to the Bronx. Hunter's father encouraged him in many ways; together they mounted puppet shows and printed their own newspaper. When Sal was a teen-ager, he announced that he wanted to be an artist. He'd been drawing for as long as he could remember, sometimes copying characters from the comics, and subliminally learning the fundamentals of narrative from such strips as "Terry and the Pirates." The hobby became a skill and the skill evolved into a wider ambition: to be a painter. He finished high school at sixteen, in 1942, and won a scholarship to the Art Students League; a year later, he was accepted at Cooper Union.

"My mother was always more pragmatic than my father," Hunter said. For a while, she worked as a clerk in the mailroom of the publishing house Harcourt, Brace. "She'd say, 'Why don't you go to engineering school like all your friends? Why do you want to go to art school?' ' 'Cause I want to be an artist, Mom.' "

Then, as now, the Cooper Union art school was a rigorous place, its scholarship students drawn by competitive examination from the élite of the city's talented young. Sal Lombino soon discovered that it was one thing to be the best artist on East 120th Street, or even in the entire East Bronx, and quite another to go up against the students at Cooper Union. He worked hard. Influenced by such Disney films as "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," "Pinocchio," and "Fantasia," he began designing a layout for an animated film. But he was also getting discouraged. In 1944, with the war on, he joined the Navy.

FOR the first time, at the age of eighteen, he was away from home, meeting people from the world beyond Manhattan and the Bronx. For the next two years, as a member of the crew of a destroyer, he saw Norfolk, Boston, and San Diego, Pearl Harbor and the Pacific. After the war ended, he spent time among the bombed-out ruins of Yokohama and Nagasaki. He painted most of the ship's signs. He drew pictures of shipboard life and of his shipmates. More important, he began to read, greedily, eclectically, as eighteen-year-olds do, and recorded his favorites in a

"Captain, it looks like we've entered cyberspace."

diary: Dashiell Hammett's "Red Harvest," Richard Wright's "Black Boy," Hemingway's "The Sun Also Rises," James M. Cain's "The Postman Always Rings Twice," novels by Lloyd C. Douglas, Willa Cather, Ngaio Marsh, G. K. Chesterton, Pearl Buck, and James Hilton. Inspired by his reading, and bored with his artwork, he started writing short stories and sent them off to *The Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, Ladies' Home Journal*, and, finally, the pulp magazines; they all came back, rejected. He kept working, helped by a former professor who was on the ship, determined to be a writer.

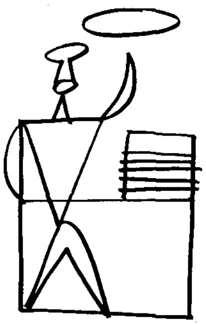
"There was a thing that happened when I started writing, and when I began to read so much," he said on this morning, more than half a century later. "I began to realize that there was no longer a *frame* around things. You weren't limited to that frame they were teaching in art school. I could go *anywhere*. I could go from a dust speck in the eye to a battlefield"—he snapped his fingers—"in a flash, in an *instant!*"

In June of 1946, Sal Lombino was offered a bonus to reënlist in the Navy; he turned it down. "I said, Sorry, I really want to get on with my life. Because I really felt, O.K., now I start." Back home, he used the G.I. Bill to matriculate at the Bronx campus of Hunter College, and began making friends with "guys who had high aspirations." He took every writing course he could find in the curriculum, playwriting, poetry, short stories. His mother, now persuaded of his seriousness, bought him his first typewriter. He wrote a weekly column for the school newspaper. With some friends, he started a drama group called the Powdered Wig Society and did everything from acting to writing press releases. The Wigs were soon known all over the Hunter campus. "If ever I had celebrity in my life," he said, smiling, "it was then, in college."

In 1949, he married a woman named Anita Melnick. He had found an apartment on North Brother Island, and to get there you had to take a bus and a ferry. "It was the same ferry that went to Riker's Island. We'd be going to our apartment and all the women would be going to see their boyfriends and husbands on Riker's Island. But it was a *great* apartment. It was like this, right on the river."

He now had a plan for the future. "My dream was that I was going to do what Hemingway did," he told me. "As soon as I graduated, I was going to go to Paris and live on the Left Bank and write a novel." But, almost immediately, his wife got pregnant. Sal Lombino graduated with honors from Hunter in January of 1950; a son, Ted, was born in August. "There was no way we could go to Paris. I had a family now."

He scrambled for work. He had taken an education minor at Hunter, which allowed him to obtain an "emergency license" that September and a teaching job at Bronx Vocational High School. "I couldn't stand it," he said. "I'd go in and give them everything I had. I would use all my acting talents, all my creative talents, trying to make interesting assignments for them. They weren't buying. They didn't give a rat's ass. All they wanted to do was fix automobiles and airplane engines."



He remembers one student who sat in the back of the classroom. "He used to come in and read the newspaper every day," he said. "He was waiting to get drafted. Then one day I said, 'You, in the back row, put down that newspaper. I'm trying to teach a class here.' He pointed the newspaper at me, and said, 'You don't bother me, I won't bother you.'" Hunter acted out the sense of menace in the young man's challenge. "I didn't bother him. I didn't care what he did for the rest of the term."

By Christmas of 1950, he had quit Bronx Vocational. He took a job answering telephones for the Automobile Association of America, and, when that didn't last, a job selling lobsters. Then he read an ad in the *Times* and his life changed abruptly.

"IT was an ad for an editor," Hunter recalled. "No experience necessary. So I went to the address in the ad—580 Fifth Avenue. I went up and looked for the number on the door. It was a frosted door and it said 'Scott Meredith Literary Agency.' I almost made the biggest mistake of my life. I had my hand on the doorknob and I thought, Aw, gee, this isn't what I want. I started to turn away from the door. But then I said, What the hell, I'm here. I was on my lunch hour from the lobster place. I went in and they said sit down."

Meredith wasn't present, but his employees told Lombino they were looking for an executive editor. They handed him a story without telling him that it had been written by one of their own editors. "It was a model of ineptness," Hunter recalled. "He did it deliberately, but I didn't know that. They said, 'Read the story and tell the writer why you think it's salable or unsalable.' I said, 'O.K.' It was a dreadful story and I wrote exactly what I thought of it. Told whoever wrote it, 'Burn it,' and told him exactly why."

Then Hunter went back to the lobster place. A few days later, he got a call from the agency, which wanted to interview him. He met the man who was leaving the editor's job. There were, the departing editor explained, two kinds of clients at the Meredith agency: amateurs, who paid fees to get their manuscripts critiqued, and professionals. The latter included P. G. Wodehouse, Mickey Spillane, Arthur C. Clarke, and Poul Anderson. Spillane's almost comically hardboiled Mike Hammer novels, which had started with "I, the Jury," in 1947, were a huge success; Anderson and Clarke were bringing new vitality and sophistication to science fiction; Wodehouse was trying to recover from the scandal of his naïve broadcasts from Nazi Germany. Sal would handle the professionals, writing critiques as if they had come from Scott Meredith himself. The pay was forty dollars a week.

"I said to him, 'Why are you leaving the job?' He said, 'I'm selling so much of my own work it doesn't pay to stay here anymore.' Puh-kooo. My ears went up, and I said, 'I'll take it.'"

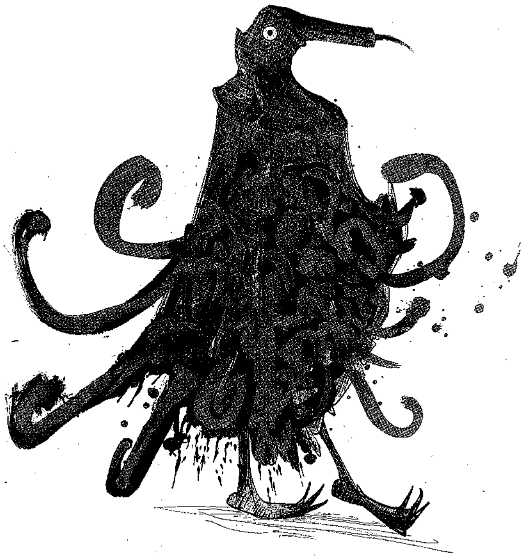
The Scott Meredith Agency was Evan Hunter's graduate school. "I learned everything there was to know about writing there," he told me. "Not only by reading stories by professional writers but by hearing the comments of editors." Often, he was the middleman, taking notes from editors and passing them on to the writers. He saw that professionals always took advice from editors; only insecure amateurs protested about trimming or rewriting. After a few months, Sal Lombino brought in some stories of his own for Meredith's scrutiny. The agent took them home for the weekend.

"On Monday morning, he said, 'Can you come in for a minute?' Sure. I went into his office. He said, '*This* you should burn. This is no good. *This*, I think I can place. This—if you want to rewrite the ending—we can try it. This, no good. This, burn.' "

Meredith sold a science-fiction story entitled "Outside in the Sand," about men landing on Mars, to the magazine *Science Fiction Quarterly*. It paid a quarter-cent a word, and, after commissions, the check came to twelve dollars and sixty cents. Sal Lombino was now a professional writer. And he was learning much from Scott Meredith. "He was a brilliant guy, who hit upon a formula that absolutely defined the successful pulp story," Hunter said. "And in today's world of fiction most of the stuff on the market is pulp stuff. John Grisham is pulp fiction. And Scott defined it perfectly."

THE world of pulp fiction is now largely forgotten, in spite of Quentin Tarantino's resurrection of the phrase as the title of his 1994 movie. The pulps started around the turn of the century, when the publisher Frank Munsey saw a market for low-priced popular fiction. He published a magazine called *Argosy*, which was printed on low-grade woodpulp paper and sold for ten cents a copy. It did extremely well, and hundreds of imitators followed. All swiftly organized themselves around genres: Westerns, sports, adventure, science fiction, fantasy, and crime. The format also became standardized: a hundred and twenty seven-by-ten-inch pages and a wonderfully lurid cover. One of the best of the crime pulps was *Black Mask*, started in 1920 by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan as a way of underwriting their political and literary magazine, *The American Mercury*. Most of the writing was dreadful hack work, but good writers did emerge—Hammett, Raymond Chandler, Erle Stanley Gardner.

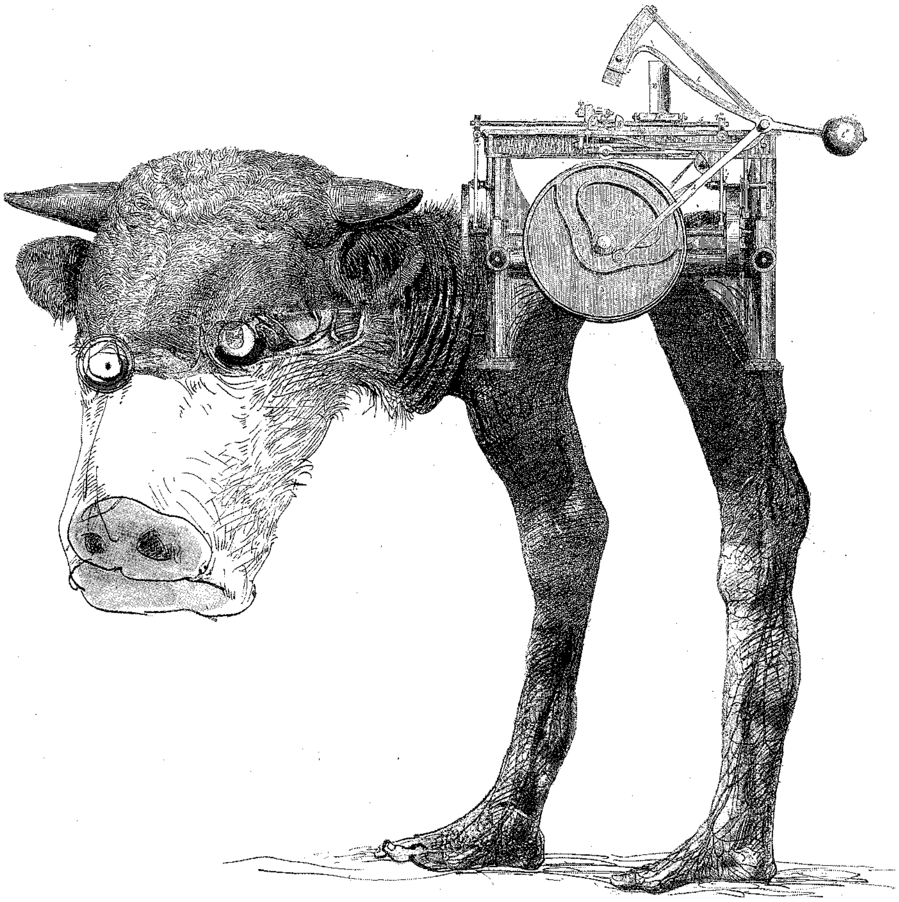
By the time Sal Lombino was starting to write for money, the pulps were past their Depression-era peak, subverted at first by radio melodramas and comic books and, a few years later, by television and *Playboy* and its imitators. Then came digest-size mystery maga-

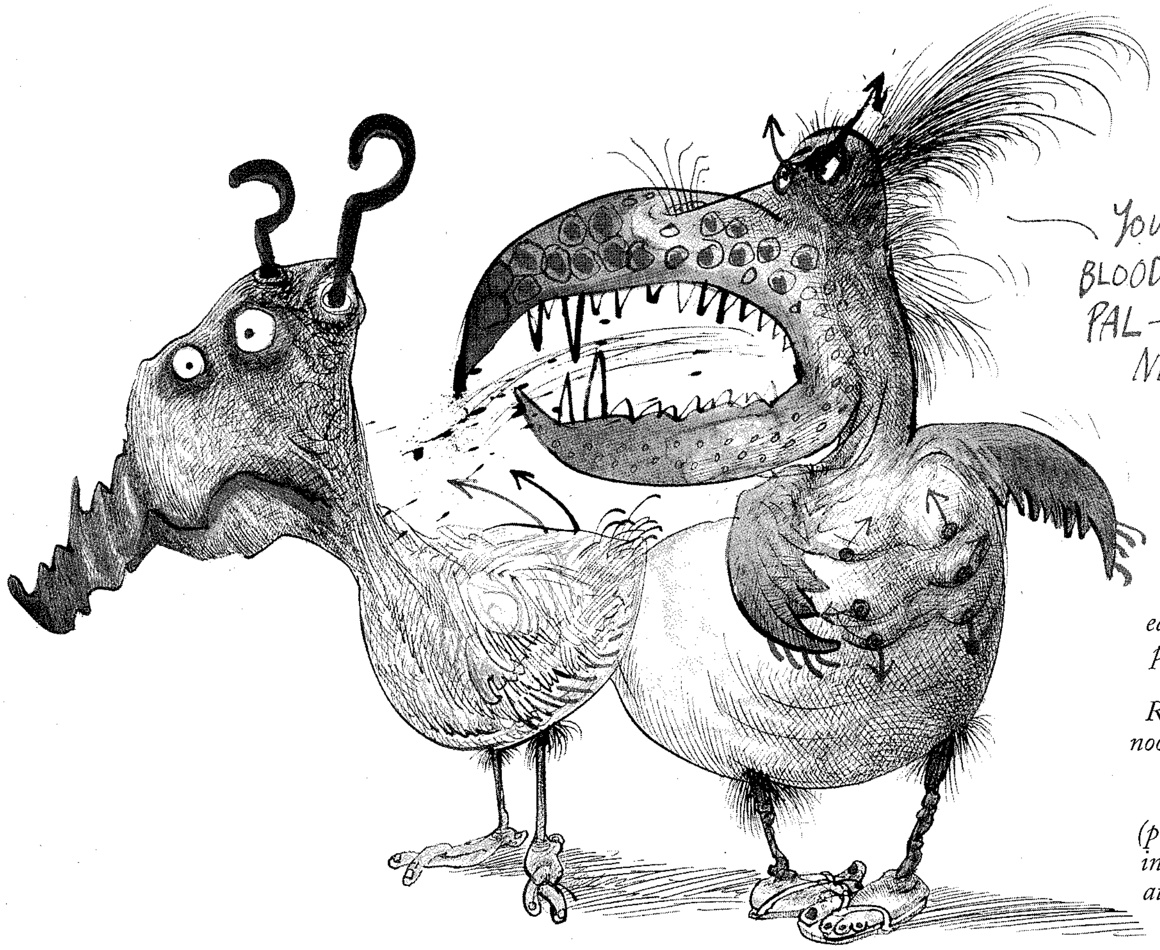


SKETCHBOOK BY RALPH STEADMAN

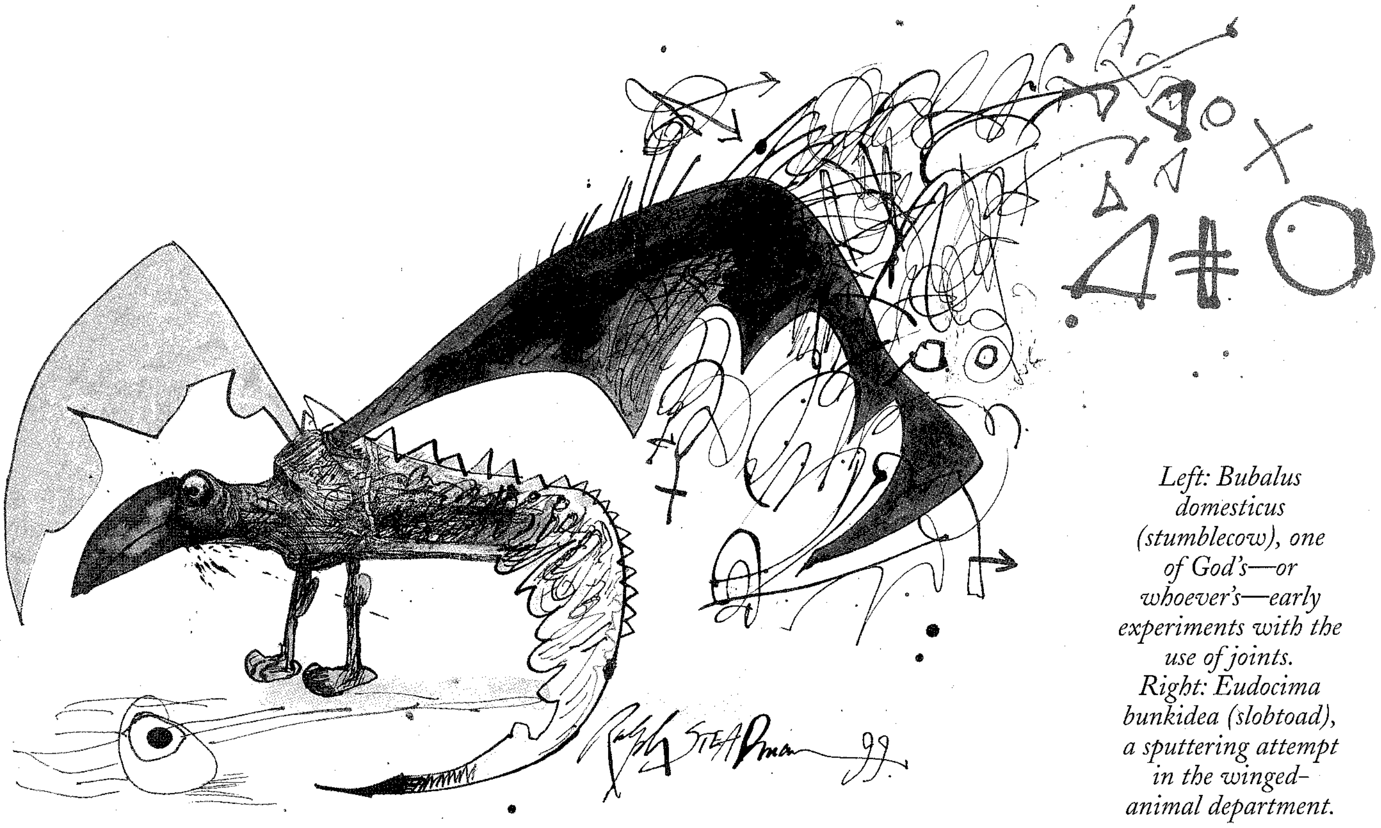
GOD'S DRAWING BOARD

Darwin is wrong. We are all wrong. We were wrong from the moment we stood up on two legs and declared, "I am MAN." Since then man has conspired to survive as the weakest and goofiest of all creatures. But man also knows the meaning of the word "humility." These missing links were found on God's Drawing Board. There is no other known record of their being on our planet. Genetically, it seems, we are on the threshold of a modified new world of discovery.—R.S.




YOU LOOK BLOODY WEIRD, PAL— YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT.

Left: Balearica pavanulus (monklout), an early example of a papal presence in the world. Right: Simboculus noop (luserphile) and Bullipompus torquonlinus (pronkmocker), who inhabited the beach at an ancient place not unlike Coney Island.


Ralph Steadman 99.

Left: Bubalus domesticus (stumblecow), one of God's—or whoever's—early experiments with the use of joints. Right: Eudocima bunkidea (slobtoad), a sputtering attempt in the winged-animal department.

zines, the best of which was *Manhunt*, and original paperback novels in the pulp genres. (Their great star was John D. MacDonald, who wrote dozens of paperback novels before making the hardcover best-seller lists, in the seventies.) Sadly, just as the pulps were beginning to die (*Black Mask* folded in 1951; most of the others were gone by 1955), the writing was getting better, focussing more on characterization than on brainless action. Still, the pulp formulas remained valuable to fiction writers in search of a large audience, which is to say writers who planned to write for a living. Even today, Hunter can recite Meredith's definition of a pulp story. Meredith's "Writing to Sell," which remains in print, in its fourth edition, puts it this way:

> A sympathetic lead character finds himself in trouble of some kind and makes active efforts to get himself out of it. Each effort, however, merely gets him deeper into his trouble, and each new obstacle in his path is larger than the last. Finally, when things look blackest and it seems certain that the lead character is finished, he manages to get out of his trouble through his own efforts, intelligence, or ingenuity.

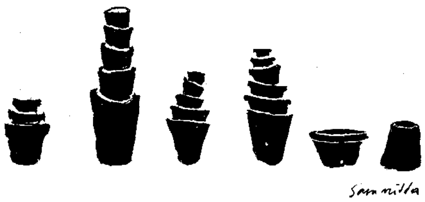
Sal Lombino applied that formula to his short fiction. He began to sell more stories to the pulps, serving the same kind of Grub Street apprenticeship that shaped the styles and work habits of many nineteenth-century writers. Some stories were science fiction. Some were adventure stories, about men lost at sea or forced to battle alligators with their bare hands. "Sometimes they started with the illustration—some heroic guy fighting animals or crazy people—and asked me to come up with a story," Hunter recalled. Some of the better stories drew on his experiences as a schoolteacher. He rose to *Bluebook*, a large-format, higher-class pulp, and to the fifties version of *Argosy*. He climbed from a quarter of a cent per word to five cents per word. Now he left work at the agency at six, took the subway home—he had by then moved to the Bronx—finished dinner by eight, and wrote until one. Not one of his stories appeared under the name Salvatore A. Lombino. He used Richard Marsten, Curt Cannon, Hunt Collins, Ezra Hannon. (Some of these were reissued years later under the Ed McBain name.) "I'd sometimes have five stories in the same issue of a pulp magazine," he recalls, "and the editor didn't know they were all me."

Then Meredith came to him with an offer. Lester Del Rey had written a number of plot summaries that were to be developed into short novels for the young-adult market and published by the John C. Winston company, in Philadelphia. Hunter can't remember much about those outlines, but he did remember Scott Meredith's question: Would Sal like to write one? He begged off, saying that he didn't know how to write a novel. Meredith insisted. Hunter remembers the agent saying, "You can do it, you can do it," and then adding, "If you run into any problems, I'll help you."

The publisher was paying twenty-five hundred dollars for each novel, a huge sum for the young writer. The first was called "Find the Feathered Serpent," a time-travel yarn, which is where Lombino first used the name Evan Hunter. The pseudonym had nothing to do with his alma mater, he says: "It was just a name."

By May of 1953, Lombino had three thousand dollars in the bank, and he told Meredith that he was leaving the agency to freelance. Meredith was not happy; he was about to offer Sal Lombino a partnership, which would entitle him to a percentage of profits. But Lombino told Meredith, "I don't want to be an agent, Scott. I want to be a writer."

HUNTER began his first real novel. The raw material came from his experience at Bronx Vocational. After five months, he had ninety pages and an outline for "The Blackboard Jungle." The day he learned the novel had been accepted by Simon & Schuster, he told me, "I was in a bakery on Eighty-sixth Street. I don't know what we were doing there—we were living in Hicksville, Long Island. My wife was buying bread or cake and I said to her, 'I think I'll call Scott and see how we're doing on the book.'" His voice began to rise in excitement. "You know, had we heard back from Simon & Schuster?" A pause. "I called, and Scott said, 'They're taking it.' And I hung up the phone and just came dancing out of that booth." He grinned, his hands pumping the air. "There are only a couple of times in my life when I've done that."



The apprenticeship was now part of the past. So was Salvatore A. Lombino. Some years earlier, an editor named Charles Heckleman had told him, "Evan Hunter will sell a lot more tickets." In those years—before anyone had heard of Mario Puzo, or Gay Talese, or Nick Pileggi—there was still much bigotry against Italian-Americans, and it extended to publishing. Salvatore A. Lombino sounded too "ethnic." Lombino legally changed his name to Evan Hunter. When he told his father about the change, Hunter recalled, "he said, 'That's a good idea, let me see what I can come up with.' He came back the next day with two hundred names! All variations on what the name was. He was hot stuff."

A few years later, Ed McBain came into the world. It is no accident that Steve Carella is the most rounded of the characters in the 87th Precinct novels, and the one who serves most often as an alter ego for his creator. In almost every book there are some references to the strength of the Italian family, and to Italian values. Here is Carella brooding in "Long Time No See":

> His grandfather had come to America from Italy because he'd been told the streets here were paved with gold. They were not, of course, and Giovanni Carella learned that almost at once, driving a horse and wagon for the milk company, the horse dropping the golden nuggets anywhere in view. Nor were the streets as clean as those to be found in Giovanni's native Naples, or so Giovanni claimed, a premise perhaps disputable. But in those days, when Carella's grandfather first got here at the turn of the century, the European sense of tradition and of place caused immigrants like himself to look upon even their slum dwellings as something to be cared for with pride.

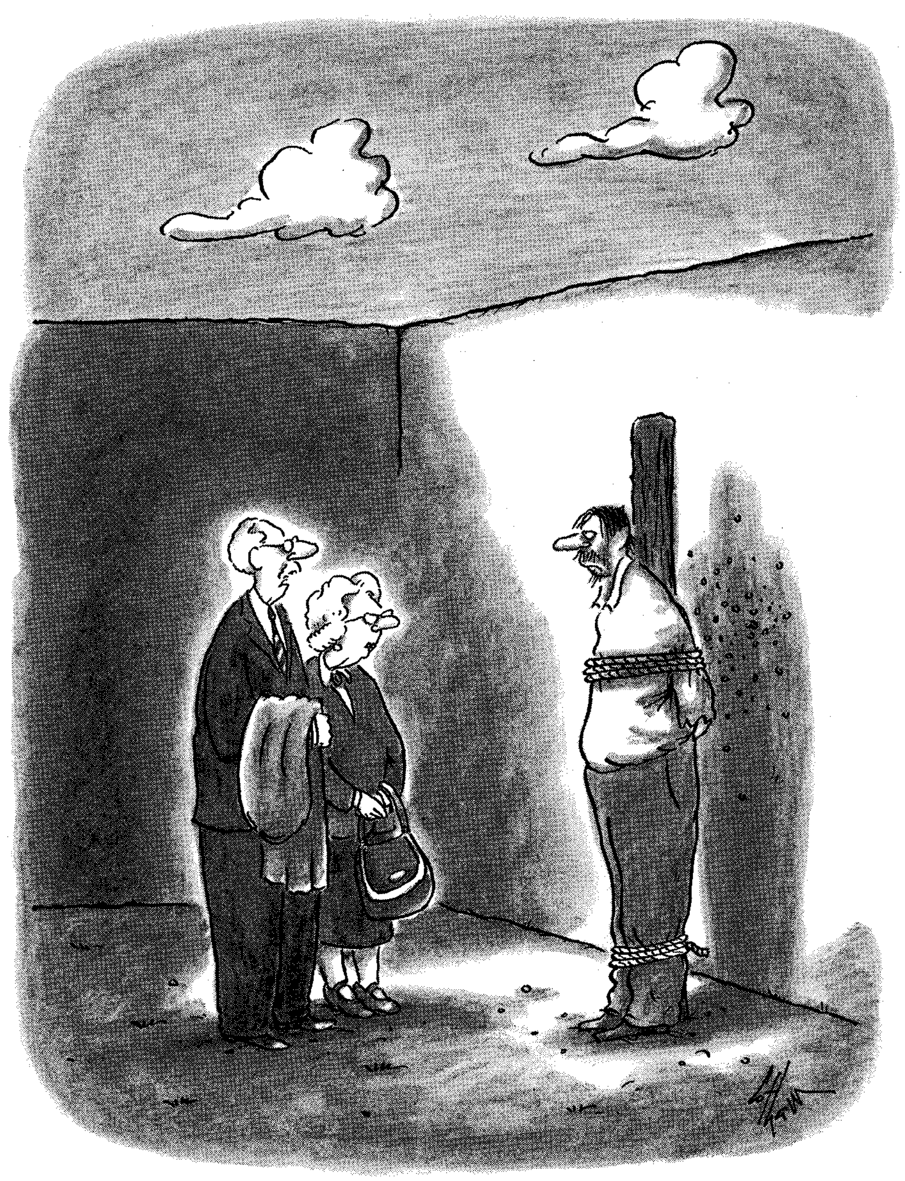
The pride is there, but Hunter is clearly not happy with what is now called "identity politics"; he still believes in the melting pot. Carella spoke for him in "The Big Bad City":

> He never thought of himself as Italian, however, because, gee, you see, he'd been born here in these United States of America, you see, and an Italian was someone who lived in Rome, or was he mistaken? He never thought of himself as an Italian-American either, because that was someone

who'd come to this country from Italy, correct? An immigrant? As for example, his father's father, whom he'd never met because the man had died before Carella was born. He was the Italian-American, the hyphenate, the man who'd come all those miles from a walled mountaintop village midway between Bari and Naples, Italian at the start of his long journey, Italian when he'd reached these shores and this big bad city, becoming Italian-American only after he'd recited the pledge of allegiance under oath.

Hunter's writing has one other very subjective distinction, and I think it derives from the disappearance of Sal Lombino. In the 87th Precinct novels, there are dozens of characters with names other than the ones they were born with; usually, they aren't pseudonyms but aliases. There are also countless examples of people who need to wear masks in order to become their best, or most powerful, selves. I remember asking Susan Sontag once if she'd ever thought about writing a detective story, and she said, "First, I'd have to invent the writer who was writing the story."

In important ways, the invention of Evan Hunter allowed Sal Lombino to write novels with a wider focus, exploring in smooth, urban prose a variety of aspects of American life. But the invention of Ed McBain allowed him to dig more deeply into the world that had shaped him when he was a boy in East Harlem and the Bronx. The Evan Hunter novels are about the world of others; the McBain novels are about their creator, a creator who remains Sal from 120th Street, figuring out that you'd better join with friends—a gang or a detective squad—who will help you when you need them. If you are a writer, you freeze time in order to more carefully examine a particular place at a particular time. "I think there are a lot of things in those books, the Ed McBains, that will have some value later on, years from now," he told me. "You can feel the city in them, see it, the people and the places and the weather. At least, I hope so."



"We've enjoyed our little visit, son, but we'd better leave—I think they're getting ready to fire."

• •

We went out for lunch one afternoon, walking along the bright, noisy street outside Hunter's Manhattan apartment. Construction workers shouted at each other, while a crane hauled Sheetrock to the upper story of a new building. "Everything is unfinished," Hunter said. "Everywhere." He was irritated because a new house he was building in Connecticut was still not done, after a year of work. "My books are in boxes, my files, my reference books," he said, walking in a style that was common in the neighborhood where I grew up in Brooklyn: the upper torso still, the legs moving swiftly, the weight heavier on one foot than on the other.

We passed women pushing infants in strollers, kids humpbacked with book bags, a tall, angular young woman heading toward the river. As I walked in the company of Evan Hunter—or, more exactly, Ed McBain—each seemed a potential victim of mayhem. At the corner, a squad car moved slowly up First Avenue, and I wondered if the cops in the car knew Steve Carella or Meyer Meyer, or Fat Ollie Weeks. If not, they should. Those characters are part of this New York, too, and the man walking beside me had put them there. When we turned the corner, I asked Hunter how many more 87th Precinct books he thought he would write. He shrugged. "There's one that I have in mind," he said. "It'll be published after I'm dead." He smiled. "I call it 'Exit.' Not bad, huh?" His hands flexed, as if he were anxious to start typing. And we bopped up the avenue together, each of us stepping more heavily on one foot than on the other. ♦

FICTION

THE GLASS HOUSE

BY CHRIS ADRIAN

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"You are your brother's image," said Captain Brewer. This wasn't exactly true. Will Fie and his brother, Sam, looked alike in the face, but Will was a much bigger boy. He stood six feet three in his socks, weighed two hundred and fifty pounds, and wasn't the least bit fat. And although Sam was three years older, he had had to leave off beating up on his little brother when he turned twelve. Will had learned to catch Sam's punches easily, and his fist was like a crab apple in Will's big hand. "If you're half as brave as him, we're lucky to have you."

"I'm not," said Will. Captain Brewer thought he was joking. Will was strong, and stubborn, and often obedient. But if bravery were one of his qualities, he would not have been frightened to stay at home. He would not have been frightened to open the door to his bedroom when his mother brought the news of his brother's death upstairs. The door had shaken as if assaulted by a strong wind, and he had not wanted to open it because he'd thought, just for a moment, that a door could bar such news from his life.

Captain Brewer was in Syracuse to help recruit replacements for those who had fallen, like Sam, at Bull Run. The Captain had written to the Fies, saying that he would like to venerate in person the parents who had raised such a boy as Sam Fie. But before the Captain could visit, Will had proceeded to Syracuse with a forged letter. In it his mother expressed her love for the Captain. Here was her other son, whom she could not dissuade from going to the war. She vouched for his age, and asked that the Captain take good care of him.

In fact, she had spat on the Captain and his name, and his offer of a visit, calling him a murderer, and saying, "How dare he show his face here?" Over meals that for Will were at first a hard chore and then a deep misery, she'd proclaim that she did not doubt that Captain Brewer had sent Sam to his death. Then she would pound her fist against her heart, and put down her head to cry while Will and his father stared at their cooling meat. They would remain that way for so long that Will imagined they might sit like that forever, a miserable tableau vivant. Some enterprising fellow might come along and cut away a wall of their house, so curious people could pay a dime to file by and peep in on them. There would be a sign: "Toll of War in Onondaga County, New York—September, 1862."

Will had left his parents' house late at night. His mother lay asleep on the green sofa upon which she had made it her custom to grieve until exhausted. He looked at her breathing noisily through her open mouth, and debated whether he ought to kiss her goodbye. As he leaned down, he thought better of it—she might wake, after all, and inaugurate some sort of hideous, tear-soaked scene. He turned away from her, and imagined, as he walked through the door, that Sam's ghost went past him, taking his place in the house as surely as he was taking Sam's place in the war.

Captain Brewer shook his hand, and then embraced him. He was mustered into the 194th New York Volunteers. Its local-minded members called it the Sixth Onondaga. The Captain insisted that Will join his own company, Company A, to which Sam had belonged. He sent his bounty money home to his parents, along with a short note: "Now I am one of Father Abraham's three hundred thousand. Goodbye."

Six dead men without shoes—their feet are swollen and their swollen chests have burst the buttons on their shirts. Behind them is a broken wagon, hooked to a dead horse. In the distance, a church where pacifists once gathered to worship.

IN Maryland, on the way to Harpers Ferry, where the Sixth had been called to help put an end to General Lee's frolicking, he saw his first Reb, a dead one who lay where he'd been killed outside a church at Burkittsville. Wounded were moaning inside the church. "What a hymn!" said Jolly Forbes, a long-faced boy who was one of the few who would associate with Will.

Company A had welcomed him initially. A cry of "Sam's brother!" had followed him wherever he went. Total strangers embraced him and wet his thick neck with tears. "It is good to see you, my friend" was a common refrain. "I am not your friend" was Will's unvarying reply. So great was their love and respect for Sam's memory—there were an even dozen men who claimed he'd saved their lives—that the men of Company A might have let this rude behavior slide, and loved Will even though he was sullen and wanted no friends. But he was actively boorish, and proved himself to be a great ruiner of fun. While they were encamped outside Washington, some man's cousin had attempted to sneak in a barrel of whiskey. She dressed it up in a little white frock, put a white bonnet on it, and heaped it with soft blankets. Soldiers cooed over it, reached into the perambulator and pretended to stroke its chin. Jolly came by and looked in. "Madame," he said, "that is the handsomest baby I have ever seen." Will was behind him, and when he saw what it was he reached in, grabbed it, and dashed that baby to the ground.

Where Sam had saved men by the dozen, Will put them into the guardhouse with his tattling. Begging Sam's forgiveness, they cursed loudly against the Devil-sent prig. Will was thrown out of the Tiger Mess, where Sam had been a member. The other members wrote out a dishonorable discharge on a gigantic piece of hardtack. Expelled for crimes against good-naturedness, it said. From then on, he messed alone or with Jolly and assorted other rejects, who had named themselves the Leper Mess.

Outside the church, two men were busy around the dead Rebel. A photographer was shouting at his assistant in French. Will knew enough French to understand that the fat little photographer—he was only about five feet tall, and shaped just like an egg—was very displeased. He wanted the assistant to turn the dead boy's face in to the sun, but the corpse was ripe and the assistant appeared to believe that to touch him would be bad for his own health. The photographer stomped over, reached up to grab his assistant by the neck, and threw him down onto the dead boy, whose arm flopped over him in an embrace. He scampered away, howling as if the dead boy had bitten him. The round photographer bent down and began to compose the Reb's limbs very carefully. He stretched out the boy's arm above his shoulder in the grass, and opened his hand. The photographer looked up, and scowled at Will. "Your goggling eyes," he said. "What are you looking at?" Just then, Captain Brewer rode up alongside in the passing column.

"Walk on, Private," he said. "There's no time for dillydallying." Will looked a little longer at the dead boy. He was wondering how Sam had fallen, if he had looked the same as this swollen, flyblown boy. He turned and gave the Captain a stiff salute, then continued walking. Not fifteen minutes from the church, they passed the battlefield of South Mountain. Dead Rebels were stacked shoulder-high along the road. He looked down at the ground as he passed the dead boys, afraid to meet their staring eyes. There would have been a funeral for Sam, back in Onondaga County, which he had missed. Had his mother thrown herself into Sam's cold arms?

Jolly had dropped out of line to walk with Will again. He held up his canteen to the orderly dead before he took a drink of water. "To your health, boys," he said.

They are swollen in this picture, too. It almost makes them look healthy, such big barrel chests, such thick legs, their clothes can barely contain them. They lie along a fence in various positions. This one has got his hands thrown over his shoulders. That one has got his hand on his belly. Where are their shoes?

THE Sixth Onondaga was ordered away from Harpers Ferry just as they reached it, drawn down off the mountain by General McClellan's sucking, gluttonous need for reinforcements. But they arrived too late to participate at Antietam. Will spent the night of September 17th helping to carry the wounded in. If they were not too fragile, he could carry them one under each arm. The darkness was a mercy. It was easier to venture among the dead when you could not see them. At dawn he was squatting by a small fire, drinking coffee with Jolly. The sun came up and seemed to shine specifically on a house near a line of battered woods. The walls were laced with cannonball holes, but a merry white column of smoke was rising from the broken chimney.

"Sometimes," said Jolly, rolling his tin cup between his hands, "I worry that there is no purpose to anything. That would be the very worst news, I think."

"God has abandoned that field, at least," Will said, hooking his thumb over his shoulder to point at the piled dead of the Irish Brigade. It was his shame that he lacked faith, but it made a sort of wicked sense to him that the universe should be an orphan, its own only parent, raised on a diet of self-taught, ignorant cruelty. He worried that there was nothing beyond the tangible world, that there was nothing beyond death but oblivion. On the way to Harpers Ferry, he had imagined his own death, trying to decide if he wanted to linger or go in a flash. These thoughts were his dispiriting occupation since he had become a soldier. He had started to fear God, even though he was certain there was no such fellow, and worried that some punishment greater than a joyless life might be in store for him.

"I think I shall be melancholy for a while," said Jolly. He looked too much like Will's brooding mother, so Will left. He was intercepted by a spindly corporal, who brought him to Captain Brewer's tent. The little Frenchman was there, and he and the Captain had filled up the tent with cigar smoke.

"Here's the boy I had in mind for you!" said Captain Brewer. He introduced Will to the photographer, who was called Carnot, but Will immediately thought of him as Frenchy.

"I know him," said M. Carnot. "I know his goggling eyes." He barked a few questions at Will in French. The Captain said he knew French—was this true? Could he read? Was he a disciplined worker? Were his hands steady? Was he a Catholic boy?

Will answered slowly first in French, and then again in English. He knew his French from a distant neighbor lady back in Onondaga County, to whom his mother had sent him for lessons because she was sure it would civilize him, though his father said it would sissify him. Of course he could read; he liked to think he was as disciplined as anybody; his hands were steady. "I am not a Catholic," he added belatedly.

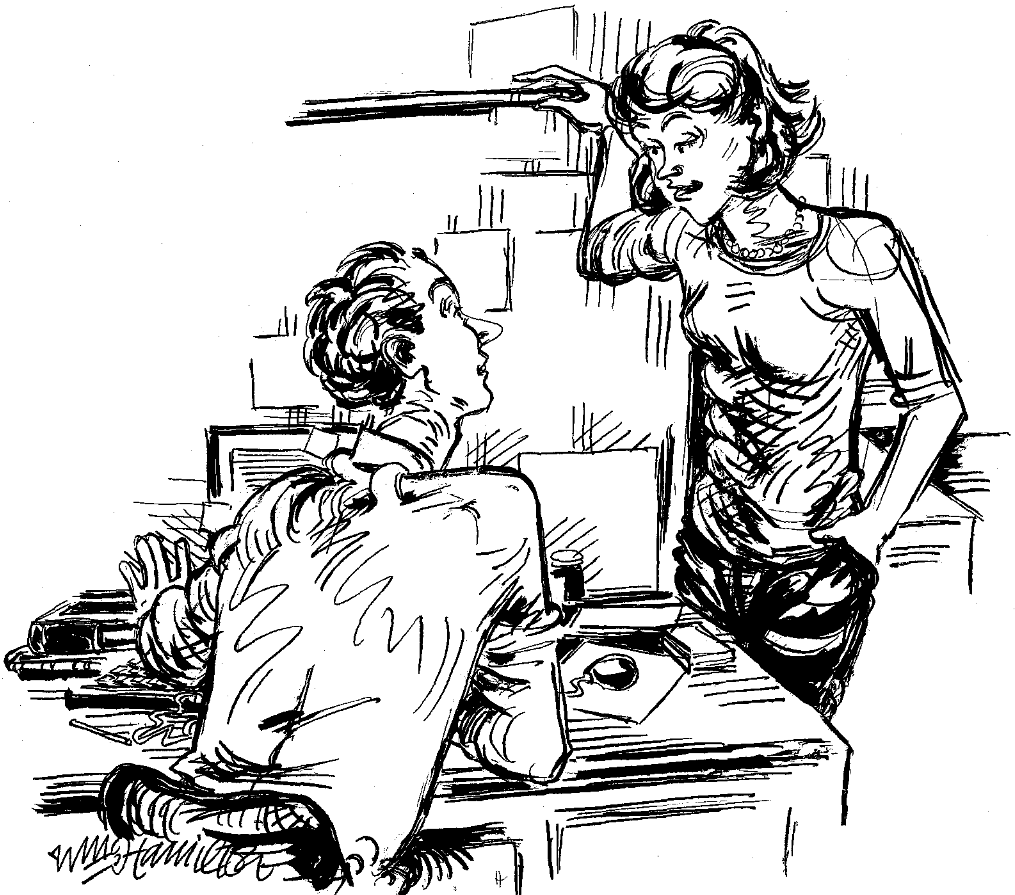
"Excellent," said M. Carnot. "I am through with superstitious idolaters. You'll do."

Captain Brewer clapped Will on the back.

"Pardon me, sir," said Will. "Has some business been transacted?"

Some had. Will had just changed hands. M. Frenchy needed a new assistant, his last one having been bayonetted the previous day by a wounded Reb when he approached, hesitantly, to rearrange the seemingly dead boy's limbs into a more dramatic pose. Will would make an ideal assistant, the Captain was sure, because of his French, and because he was industrious and smart. Will had the same feeling he'd had when he was kicked out of the Tiger Mess. He got no certificate this time, but he had the distinct impression that he was being thrown out of Company A.

He wasn't, though. Not precisely. He would still eat and sleep and fight with his company, but he was also to serve as assistant and bodyguard to the extremely well-connected M. Frenchy, who had letters from on high, through Sedgwick and McClellan all the way up to the Secretary of War, giving him permission to take pictures of the field. He called himself an artist and a scientist. His aim, he said, was to quantify and qualify the brutality of war.



"I've done the numbers, and I will marry you."

Packed bodies in a sunken road. Try as he might, Will could not resolve them into separate boys. They lay in a dead tangle, arms and legs thrown over one another. Will put this picture high on the north wall of the house.

WILL carried equipment and helped arrange the dead. He would look away from their faces as he moved them. Some were stiff. Frenchy screamed at him when he balked at forcing a fallen cavalryman's arm into a more pleasing position. Will broke the poor man's shoulder, crossing his arm over his chest, and he wondered that the whole Rebel Army did not come pouring down on him for abusing its dead so. If he was not rearranging the dead, he was helping to bury them. Frenchy cursed the burying. His precious dead were vanishing into the ground.

They joined the lazy pursuit that toddled after the fleeing Rebels. As they travelled, Frenchy taught him the photographic process, screeching whenever he wasted a plate. He spent hours in Frenchy's cramped wagon, mixing collodion from guncotton and sulfuric ether and alcohol, then coating the mixture onto glass plates. Frenchy scolded like a harpy, but he also spoke generous praise—his assistant was learning quickly. Pressed for time, he brought a plate back to Will in the wagon, and let him develop it while he took another wet plate and went to make another picture. Will removed the plate from its holder. He held it over a pan and poured developer over the glass. The developer reeked like a cocktail of vinegar and blood, and he almost dropped the negative when a violent sneeze shook him. He leaned down and squinted in the dim yellow light of the lantern. There was the image rising out of the glass, as if up through water.

Here is a boy with his legs impossibly twisted. Someone has stolen his hips and replaced them with a little stretch of earth. His hand is cupped behind his ear, as if he were straining to hear some news. This one goes on the east wall, where it will catch the light of the rising sun.

AT Fredericksburg, Frenchy was made busy by the carnage below Marye's Heights. It was December, and bitter cold. Frenchy was lost in a wilderness of borrowed coat—his own was still wet from a fall off a pontoon bridge into the Rappahannock. He swam like an otter, and looked like one, with his wet brown hair and shiny black eyes.

With his head in his camera, Frenchy was blind to danger. Will kept an eye out for sneaking Rebels. A truce had been called, to gather the dead and wounded, but he did not trust them to keep it. A profusion of boys was strewn on the ground, none of them closer than a hundred yards to the stone wall against which Burnside had thrown them.

"Did you ever think you'd be a photographer?" Frenchy asked from under the camera hood, saying the word with great reverence.

"No," said Will. When he was a boy, he wanted to become a sailor, because he and Sam had been great fans of "Typee," and had imagined a scummy pond behind their house to be the wide green bay of Nukuheva. Then he thought he would be a doctor, for no good reason except that to doctor was not to farm, like his father. Now he thought he might have been growing up all this time to be a brick in a wall of corpses.

Frenchy pulled his head from the camera and made a confession to Will, to whom he was beginning to show something like affection. It was his hope, he said, to take a picture of a soldier at the precise moment of his death, because he believed the departing soul, invisible to a human eye, would be seen by the camera. Soon afterward, he found a squirmer on the cold field, but by the time he'd readied the camera the boy was dead.

Will was much in demand the whole day through. In the late afternoon, when the light had grown too weak for taking pictures, he took up a pick to open the frozen ground for graves, and worked at it till his arms and shoulders burned. There were always more dead to bury, some of them naked because ill-clad Rebs had crept forth from their lines to steal the clothes in the night. When he stopped working, he could barely raise his arms to feed himself. He found Frenchy in a hospital tent, with his camera set up by the bedside of a blond-headed boy who looked for sure to be a goner. Will's hands were a mess of blisters. Frenchy gave him a plate to develop, but Will dropped it, which earned him a cursing so thorough he had to resist an urge to knock the little man down. Frenchy nearly got ejected from the tent, for all that he brought out his omnipresent letters of recommendation and waved them like a little set of battle colors. He took up his vigil again, and sent his assistant away.

Will went back to Company A. They'd been held in reserve for most of the previous day, having seen just a smidgen of action when they were called up in support of a battery below the town. They'd all lain down on the ground while shells burst above their heads, and their only casualty was a boy who was overcome with excitement and accidentally shot himself in the hand. Jolly was having his dinner with a few other members of the Leper Mess. A tall, thin boy named Lewy Greeley, who was unpopular on account of his incessant proselytizing, was lamenting his fate. "This is the worst regiment ever," he said, stabbing his beans with a spoon. "We see no good action and are overrun with godlessness. I think I will go off and join the 146th." He meant the 146th Illinois, a regiment composed entirely of Methodist ministers. They sang booming hymns as they loaded, primed, and fired. God was with them in precisely the way that he was not with this here assembly of lawyers and farmers.

"I'll cut you a new mouth to whine with, if you don't shut up," said Jolly, who was not known for making idle threats. Will sat back on his heels, picked out hot beans with his fingers, and raised them slowly to his mouth. "Did you see the sky last night, Tiny?" Jolly asked him.

"I did," he said. There had been a fantastic display. The northern lights had come south to blaze in the sky above the Union right. Will had rolled onto his back to watch, holding to his eye a cracked lens pilfered from the wagon, thinking it would be fine to take a picture of such a thing as that festive sky.

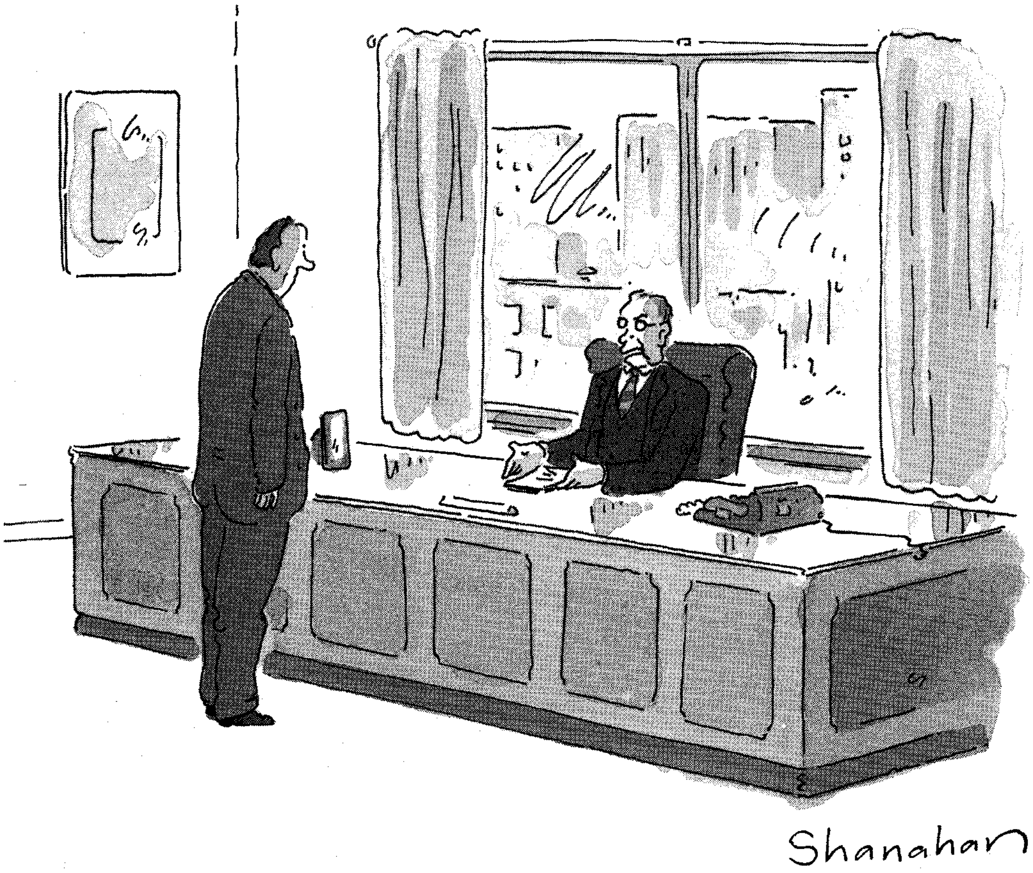
"Do you suppose it was a sign? Do you suppose it was God waving his hanky for the Rebs? Perhaps it is our purpose to lose."

"We were good Christians today, then," said Will.

"No," said Lewy Greeley. "Not ever."

A catalogue of expressions—fear, sadness, rage, surprise, tenderness, even what appears to be a broad smile, this last on a head attached by strings to its body. A catalogue of parts—arms and legs, trunks and bellies, ears and noses, a flat section of skull in the grass. The hair is still attached, but the rest of the body is nowhere to be seen. It might be a muskrat, crouched there. The whole west wall is a catalogue of parts and faces.

IN May of '63, Will drifted across the Rappahannock with a few other members of Company A. Lewy Greeley was there, and so was Jolly. It was just before dawn. They were going over to clear out some intractable sharp-



"I've decided to step down, Chilton, and, regrettably, you're underfoot."

shooters, who were making it impossible to lay down pontoons for a bridge. Lewy Greeley was twitching with excitement. Months of idleness in winter camp had made him a nervous creature. A few times, at night on picket duty, he had fired blindly at the enemy lines. Now he could barely contain himself. Inhospitable Rebs were firing at them already, though their visit was supposed to be a surprise. Lewy kept trying to stand up in the boat. A wag in a neighboring boat had stood up and shaken his ass at the Rebs, then crouched down again without taking a hit. "Let go, you big ape!" Lewy said to Will, tearing his sleeve free of Will's fingers.

"Stay down, Lewy," said Jolly. "It's positively unhealthy up there."

Lewy paid him no mind. He stood up in the boat and said, "Look at me! I am a marine!" A bullet took him in the head. He fell down and was still, but his blood came out furiously from him, and pooled around their knees.

"Ah, Lewy," said Jolly. "You were too much of a bother for this world."

The Rebs offered up a few more volleys, but left the bank with hardly any fight at all. Will stood by a tree, ostensibly guarding the engineers as they worked, but he was really looking at Lewy's body, which had been wrapped up in a coat and laid upon the bank. He wished he had a picture of him, because he had discovered he could better empathize with a picture of a dead boy than with the dead boy himself. If he had a picture he might have wondered if Lewy, in the half-second during which he took his bullet, and knew that he would die, thought of his Methodist regiment, and hoped to join it in Heaven, though he could not join it on earth. If he could have chosen a word and spoken it as he died, what would it have been? With a picture, Will might have imagined how it felt to be wounded like Lewy; he might have held a hand up to touch his own pulse beating in his temple. As it was, he was filled with a stony, gray feeling, and found he was already forgetting what Lewy looked like.

Lewy Greeley, carefully arranged. He looks noble in a way he never did in life. He lies with his arms folded over his chest, his pale face serene and pretty, in a patch of morning sunlight. He might be dreaming. Will put him on the north wall, with all the rest of the boys from Company A.

"I'VE failed!" Frenchy said, sitting by his wagon a few days after Lewy's death, after Company A and the rest of the Army of the Potomac had scurried back over the Rappahannock in the wake of the great disaster at Chancellorsville. Frenchy had been cross because the wounded, dying, and dead had been left on the other side of the river where he could not photograph them. He had retreated to a hospital tent and taken up a post next to a boy who was clinging to life, despite the amputation of his legs and repeated assaults by the bloody flux. In his delirium, he thought Frenchy was his mother. Previously, Frenchy had wandered away for food or water or fallen asleep at the critical moment, but this boy wailed piteously if he left his side, so he was there for the death. "Miserable, hideous failure!" he said. It was a very pleasant night, and he'd come stomping through the moonlight to where Will was sitting by the wagon, thinking back to the other side of the river. The beautiful moonlight had settled over everything there, though it seemed to Will that it should recoil from boys whose heads decided to go every which way at once, from open bellies and naked bones.

Frenchy cast the negatives on the ground at Will's feet, breaking a plate in half. Will took them up one by one and held them to the moon: there was the boy, his terrible wounds preserved forever. Will found himself wondering if it was not the opposite of mercy to have preserved them so. The boy in these pictures would always be in pain. His face was a blur—he seemed to have a multiplicity of mouths, all of them calling for his mother. But in the last picture, the broken one, he was still. "It was just as he went," said Frenchy. "I know that it was, but there is no exhalation, there is nothing but air about him."

Will left Frenchy to his misery, and walked off with the broken pieces of the last plate. He wandered aimlessly through the camp and out of it, thinking that he held in his hands proof of the nonexistence of souls. He thought of Sam, of how he had been friendly when they were small, aside from the occasional beating up, and how he had been distant when they were older, how they had fallen out with each other over something unspoken and unknown, and how there was now no hope of reconciliation between the living and the dead. He sat down on the ground, hung his head, and wept as only a boy of his size could weep, great racking sobs, his chest heaving with the strength of five lesser chests. It made him afraid to think that everything he was could vanish into an abyss when he took, as he felt he must, his mortal wound. And it made him unbearably sad to think how everything Sam was had simply ended.

He had wandered into a graveyard full of Union dead. He'd buried some of them himself the previous winter. After he'd quieted down, he sat there awhile, and thought he must have fallen asleep, because he was sure he was dreaming when seven gaily dressed women drifted into the graveyard. Four carried lanterns, which they set down in a great square pattern. They put their heads together and whispered, and seemed to be waiting for something. In a while, a little man came tiptoeing out of the darkness. He bowed to them and took a fiddle from a case, then started to play a jig. The ladies began a sprightly dance upon the graves of the Union dead.

They did not see Will in his dark uniform. They did not see how, with their dancing, they turned his sadness to rage. The piece of plate, when it came flying out of the darkness, must have seemed like a judgment from whatever god guards the dignity of the dead. It struck a woman in the hip—in her petticoats or her flesh, Will could not be sure. She shrieked and the ladies dispersed, leaving their lanterns behind.

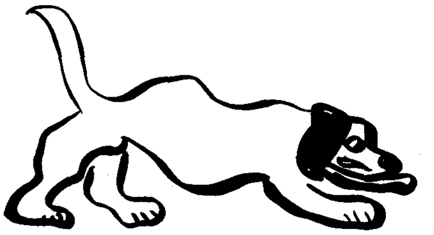
A boy with a hole where his chest ought to be. He is arranged on his side. His big, serious eyes look directly at the camera. His left hand is stretched out, open as if in supplication, as if to say, "Give it back." He is the fourth image from the right, in the second row from the bottom, on the south wall.

"MY mama says I should remember that I am fighting to preserve the best government on earth," Jolly said. It was dinnertime on the evening of July 2nd, the second day at Gettysburg. The Sixth Onondaga had taken up position too late, again, to have seen action. Other regiments made fun of them, saying their ugly faces scared away the elephant. Sometimes Will thought it must be his mother's doing, this safety. Her towering grief would not allow him to be hurt—it was of such a nature that even fate must be afraid of it. "But my father, he says we must help the slaves, even if the Union goes all to smash." Jolly held up two letters, one from his mother and one from his father, in either hand. "What do you think?" he asked Will.

"I don't know," he said. He took the letters from Jolly and put them behind his back, passing them from hand to hand before he told Jolly to pick one. Jolly chose the left hand, and Will gave him back the letter. Jolly looked at it, rubbing his eyes wearily.

"Well?" said Will.

"Well, I am fighting for my father's cause," said Jolly. They sat alone for a while, before they started making their dinner, a beef stew. Jolly had taken off his shirt and rolled up the sleeves of his long johns, because of the heat. They were the only two members of the Leper Mess left, the others having died or deserted or been absorbed into more respectable associations. They spent a little while crushing hardtack for their stew. "God save me from this cracker," Jolly said, struggling to break it. Will crushed his easily into a fine powder, and made dumplings with water from his canteen. These he set gingerly into the stew, amid pieces of beef and vegetables. Jolly leaned over the pot to pour in a cup of coffee, and then they took turns sprinkling in crushed cracker to thicken the stew. "Oh, it will be delicious!" said Jolly, but when it came time to eat he said he was not hungry, and gave his portion to Will.



They lay down in their dog tent, not sleeping, though both were exhausted from their recent march—they'd gone twenty miles a day for three days. They were after sprightly old Lee again, and the long, long march had made Will think they must be chasing him this time to Canada. "I think sometimes it might not be real," said Jolly. Will's guts were making a racket, rejoicing over the stew, he figured. "When I was a boy, my mother told me the whole world was just the dream of a sleeping bear, and that we had to be careful not to be too horrible in our behavior toward one another, because we might shock the bear into wakefulness, and then we would be no more. That was blasphemy. But couldn't a war be God's conscience fretting with itself? Maybe he has put himself down for a nap, but his digestion is poor, and it has troubled his dream. All our history might be no longer than such a nap, don't you think? His troubled conscience has dreamed a war. I worry, anyhow, that we will wake him."

Will said nothing. Jolly took his hand and put it over his chest. His heart was fluttering. "Is it beating?" Jolly asked him. "Am I alive?"

"Yes," said Will, and took his hand away.

"Sometimes I wonder."

The negative images look like portraits of ghosts. They are pale where living people are dark, dark where the living are pale. When the sun passes through the glass negatives, it is like a visitation from beyond, the way they shimmer and glow. At night, when he goes into the unfinished house with a lantern, the backing darkness makes ambrotypes of the images, and the dead take on the tones and shades of the living. It makes sense to him that it should be so, that the dead should be more solid, should look more real at night, and that the day should make ghosts of them.

FRENCHY had acquired new hope. He had determined that he'd failed to capture the boy's departing soul because his medium was insensitive. He needed a better collodion—hadn't Fox Talbot's calotype process been similarly insensitive, hadn't it also been defective?

He'd been gone for two weeks in June, consulting with a learned gentleman in New York. When he returned, he had a new formula. It was the same as the old one, except that he added three drops of a liquid from a mysterious-looking blue bottle. The liquid looked and smelled like whiskey, and Will was tempted to smash the bottle.

Will and Jolly got separated in the last day's fighting at Gettysburg, of which the Sixth Onondaga had more than its fair share. Will was called away by Frenchy, whose mule had died in the overshots of the Rebel artillery. Will himself pulled the wagon to safety, while Frenchy screeched at him to hurry. Ambulances and sutler's tents were meeting their end all around him. He and Frenchy fled down the Baltimore Pike until they came to a place of comparative safety, where they waited amid a crowd of other fugitives. Frenchy's powerful letters of recommendation helped him to appropriate a new mule. By the time Will got back to the Sixth's position at Culp's Hill, it was almost night. He spent the evening looking fruitlessly for Jolly.

On the Fourth of July, he ventured out into the rain with Frenchy. For the first time, he saw many boys from the Sixth dead on the field. There was a boy, one of the first he'd met, who, as they waited in the train to leave Syracuse, had asked Will to do him a favor. "Hey, Goliath," he'd said, "give me a boost." Will had hoisted him through the window, thinking for a moment he'd had a last-minute change of heart and was going to desert. But all he wanted was kisses. There were women clustered around the train, come to bid goodbye to the boys of Onondaga County. Will held the fellow by his boots as he puckered his lips up and meshed them wetly with the wanton lips of three, five, and then ten different women. Will had dropped him on his head, and lost his first friend in the regiment. He was a little dark fellow, whose lips were wide and thick. On reflection, Will understood how he might feel pressed to kiss excessively with them. Now they were gone, torn away by a bullet or a fragment of shell.

Frenchy had just scolded Will for moving a pile of dead into convincing "as they fell" positions—he was supposed to be looking for the dying, not playing with the dead—when Will uncovered a living Reb. He opened his gray eyes and began to squall when Will grabbed his arm. "Don't bury me!" he said. "I ain't dead, you son of a bitch!" It was a marvel, though, that he was alive. His belly had been opened, and his guts were spilling from the wound. "Go away," he said to Will, once it became clear to him that Will was not going to bury him. "Ain't it enough that you killed me? Why don't you leave me in peace? My granny is coming up to get me. She'll be here soon. She doesn't care for greasy Yanks, and one who shines and stinks like you would offend her." Just briefly, Will considered piling the bodies back on top of him.

"I'll take you to the doctors," Will said. There was a hospital tent several hundred yards away.

"No," said the Reb. Frenchy came waddling up excitedly.

"You beautiful boy!" he said to the Reb.

"Leave me be," the boy said. But they wouldn't. Will cleared away the bodies from around the boy and Frenchy gave him sips of whiskey from a flask. While Frenchy set up his camera, the boy seemed to fall asleep, so Will decided then to pick him up and carry him to the hospital tent. The boy woke and began to scream horribly, and Frenchy screamed horribly, too. Will hurried off, ignoring Frenchy's curses. The boy would not stop calling him a dirty Yank. Will held him tight, lest something vital spill out and drag along the ground. But by the time he got to the hospital the boy was silent and dead. Will put him down on a door set on two sawhorses, which had lately served as a surgery table. Had he felt anything leave the body as he walked? Had a spirit passed through him? It would have felt like a chill, he was sure. But he had felt nothing. He sat there for a long while, not wanting anymore to assist Frenchy in an enterprise that suddenly seemed stupid and vile and immensely rude.

Frenchy was dead when Will went back for him, shot through the chest as he was taking a picture. Jolly was his subject, dead now, too, though Will was certain that he had been mostly alive for his portrait. He had no immediately visible wound on him. Will was struck by the thought that Jolly must have died of sadness and uncertainty, but when he looked closer he could see that he'd been shot in the thigh. He'd crossed his legs demurely, as if to hide the wound. His brow, when Will laid his hand on it, was still warm, but even as he knelt there it grew cold. Will closed his eyes and waited for someone to shoot him. He wanted to say something but seemed to have forgotten, for the moment, every word he ever knew. His mother intruded into his mind then. She dragged her green sofa onto the battlefield and reclined upon it. She gathered Jolly into her lap and cried out, "Where is it written that a woman has got to bear such a load of heartache?"

The camera had fallen over, but the

DESIRE

It's the way they cannot understand the window
they buzz and buzz against, the bees who take
a wrong turn at my door and end up thus
in a drift at first of almost idle curiosity
cruising the room until they find themselves
smack up against it and they cannot fathom how
the air has hardened and the world they know
with their eyes keeps out of reach as, stuck there
with all they want just in front of them, they must
press their bodies against the one unalterable law
of things—this fact of glass—and can only go on
making the one sound that tethers their pure
electric fury to what's impossible, will not change.

—Eamon Grennan

plate inside was whole and unexposed. With the plate closed up in a box, Will walked to where the new mule had taken the wagon, a few hundred yards away. Under the yellow light, he poured the developer over the plate and waited for the image.

There is Jolly's long face, his lips turned down in a frown. His eyes are open. His head is resting on his arm. He is pointing at nothing. He has wrapped his mouth around a piece of grass. Something is rising from him. It looks like a bit of dark mist in the shape of a wing.

IN the Wilderness, and at Spotsylvania, at Cold Harbor and Petersburg, the Sixth saw the elephant abundantly, and it trampled them. Frenchy would have had many opportunities to take his world-changing picture. Brave or foolish behavior got Will back into the Tiger Mess—he saved some lives and became better liked. He wanted friends, all of a sudden, as immediately and as intensely as he had not wanted them before. He would still smash your whiskey, but that became something they could overlook in the dwindling fraternity of Company A. The boys got into the habit of writing their names and the addresses of their families on slips of paper, which they pinned to their shirts before they went into battle. Will had a slip pinned to his shirt, but it was not his parents' address he'd written down—he didn't want even his dead body to go back home. Instead, he'd written, "Sam, here I come."

He had many near-misses. It seemed that bullets wanted to touch him. He got grazed on his arms and legs, along his scalp. He lost an earlobe. But he never got a serious wound, though he felt at last that he was ready for one. Jolly's picture, which he kept in his knapsack by day and under his head at night, cheered him. Such a spirit shape might rise from him, when his bullet finally found him. Such a spirit shape as rose from Jolly might have risen from Sam, might abide in some place free from the heavy cares of the war and the world.

GENEROUS Frenchy had made up a sort of will, which he would have changed, no doubt, had he lived after Will betrayed him at Gettysburg. He'd left instructions with Captain Brewer. In the event of his death, his assistant was to have his wagon and all it contained, as well as a big brass key, with an address. Will sold the wagon. He kept only the key and Jolly's negative.

After the war he went to Brooklyn, where his key opened up a musty photography studio on the fourth floor of a building on Fulton Street. The rent, he discovered, was paid through the next two years. He walked among the props—marble columns, rich draperies, painted backgrounds depicting mountains or the sea. In a dark corner, beneath a gigantic rubber blanket, he found neat tall stacks of negatives, hundreds and hundreds of them, all taken during the war, some of which he'd developed himself. Frenchy had been sending them back to this place.

He built the house on the roof. There was a derelict greenhouse up there, whose clear glass panels he tore out and replaced with the boys by the church, the boy with no hips, the catalogues. The hundreds of negatives became four walls and a roof. Finally, there was Jolly's picture—it went above the door, in what Will thought must be the position of honor. He put it in place, the last panel, and the house was finished.

It still lacked an hour till dawn. He sat inside without a light. What would happen when the sun came to shine down on the finished house? Would the white ghosts assault him? Would the mist that might be Jolly's spirit depart from the plate and settle over him like manna? Maybe spirits would crowd the house, and maybe Sam would be among them. Maybe Will would fall asleep under their images and dream their vanished lives. Maybe nothing would happen. Dawn was in the sky, now. The sun was just starting to peep over a neighboring building. He closed his eyes and he waited. ♦

CONSTABULARY NOTES FROM ALL OVER

[*From the Springfield (Ill.) State Journal-Register*]

A man told Springfield police late Tuesday that he believes another man who lives at the same address in the 1100 block of East Adams Street switched glass eyeballs with him.

The victim, 41, said the other man, who is 43 or 44 years old, also has a fake eye but apparently preferred the victim's.

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THE CRITICS

BOOKS

BABY STEPS

Do our first three years of life determine how we'll turn out?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

In April of 1997, Hillary Clinton was the host of a daylong conference at the White House entitled "What New Research on the Brain Tells Us About Our Youngest Children." In her opening remarks, which were beamed live by satellite to nearly a hundred hospitals, universities, and schools, in thirty-seven states, Mrs. Clinton said, "Fifteen years ago, we thought that a baby's brain structure was virtually complete at birth." She went on:

> Now we understand that it is a work in progress, and that everything we do with a child has some kind of potential physical influence on that rapidly forming brain. A child's earliest experiences—their relationships with parents and caregivers, the sights and sounds and smells and feelings they encounter, the challenges they meet—determine how their brains are wired. . . . These experiences can determine whether children will grow up to be peaceful or violent citizens, focussed or undisciplined workers, attentive or detached parents themselves.

At the afternoon session of the conference, the keynote speech was given by the director turned children's advocate Rob Reiner. His goal, Reiner told the assembled, was to get the public to "look through the prism" of the first three years of life "in terms of problem solving at every level of society":

> If we want to have a real significant impact, not only on children's success in school and later on in life, healthy relationships, but also an impact on reduction in crime, teen pregnancy, drug abuse, child abuse, welfare, homelessness, and a variety of other social ills, we are going to have to address the first three years of life. There is no getting around it. All roads lead to Rome.

The message of the conference was at once hopeful and a little alarming. On the one hand, it suggested that the right kind of parenting during those first three years could have a lasting effect on a child's life; on the other hand, it implied that if we missed this opportunity the resulting damage might well be permanent. Today, there is a zero-to-three movement, made up of advocacy groups and policymakers like Hillary Clinton, which uses the promise and the threat of this new brain science to push for better pediatric care, early childhood education, and day care. Reiner has started something called the I Am Your Child Foundation, devoted to this cause, and has enlisted the support of, among others, Tom Hanks, Robin Williams, Billy Crystal, Charlton Heston, and Rosie O'Donnell. Some lawmakers now wonder whether programs like Head Start ought to be drastically retooled, to focus on babies and toddlers rather than on preschoolers. The state of California recently approved a fifty-cent-per-pack tax on cigarettes to fund programs aimed at improving care for babies and toddlers up to the age of five. The state governments of Georgia and Tennessee send classical-music CDs home from the hospital with every baby, and Florida requires that day-care centers play classical music every day—all in the belief that Mozart will help babies build their minds in this critical window of development. "During the first part of the twentieth century, science built a strong foundation for the physical health of our children," Mrs. Clinton said in her speech that morning. "The last years of this century are yielding similar breakthroughs for the brain. We are . . . coming closer to the day when we should be able to insure the well-being of children in every domain—physical, social, intellectual, and emotional."

The First Lady took pains not to make the day's message sound too extreme. "I hope that this does not create the impression that, once a child's third birthday rolls around, the important work is over," she said, adding that much of the brain's emotional wiring isn't completed until adolescence, and that children never stop needing the love and care of their parents. Still, there was something odd about the proceedings. This was supposed to be a meeting devoted to new findings in brain science, but hardly any of the brain science that was discussed was new. In fact, only a modest amount of brain science was discussed at all. Many of the speakers were from the worlds of education and policy. Then, there was Mrs. Clinton's claim that the experiences of our first few years could "determine" whether we grow up to be peaceful or violent, focussed or undisciplined. We tend to think that the environmental influences upon the way we turn out are the sum of a lifetime of experiences—that someone is disciplined because he spent four years in the Marines, or because he got up every morning as a teen-ager to train with the swim team. But Hillary Clinton was proposing that we direct our attention instead to what happens to children in a very brief window early in life. The First Lady, now a candidate for the United States Senate, is associating herself with a curious theory of human development. Where did this idea come from? And is it true?

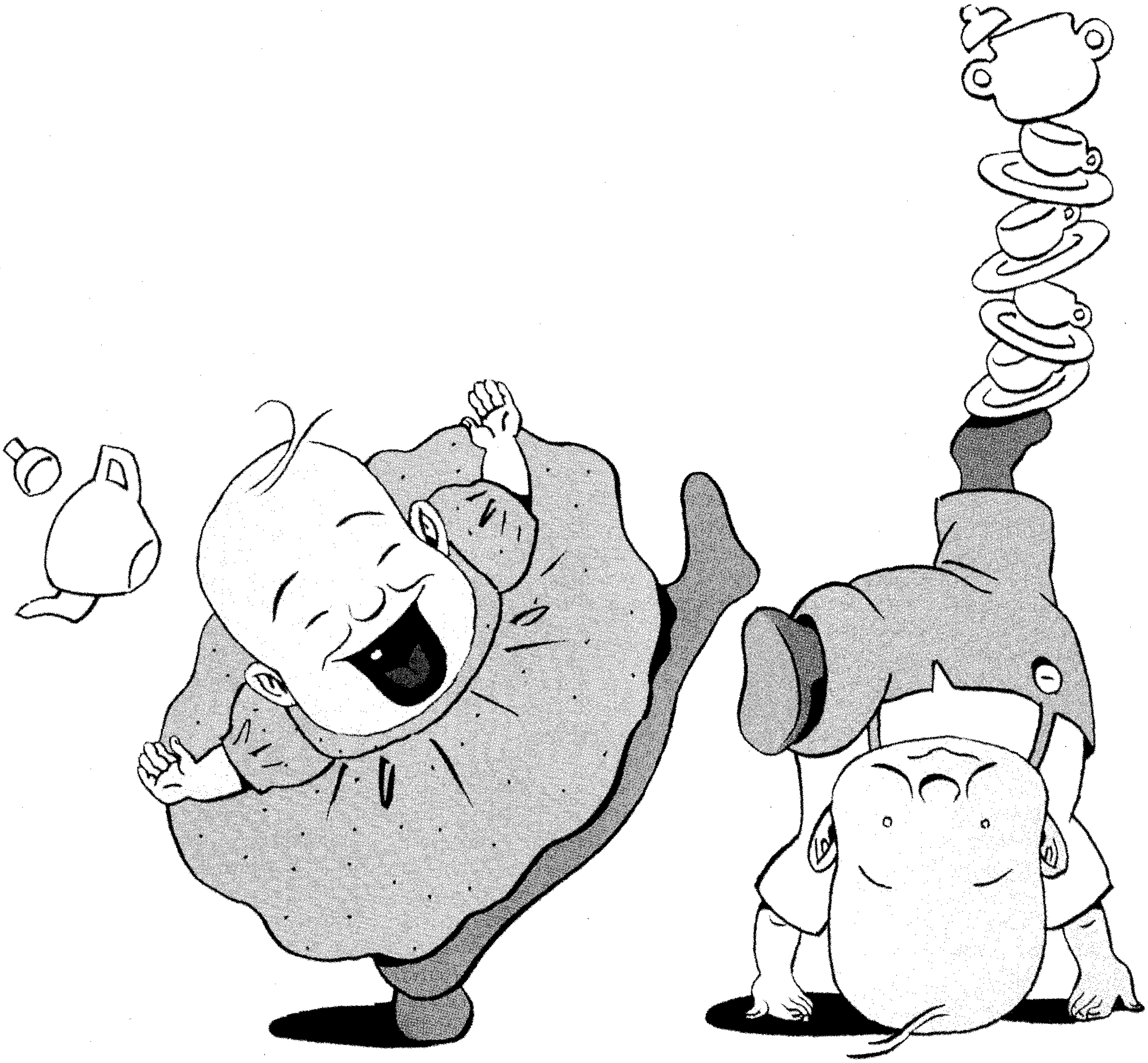
John Bruer tackles both these questions in his new book, "The Myth of The First Three Years" (Free Press; $25). From its title, Bruer's work sounds like a rant. It isn't. Noting the cultural clout of the zero-to-three idea, Bruer, who heads a medical-research foundation in St. Louis, sets out to compare

NICOLE CLAVELOUX

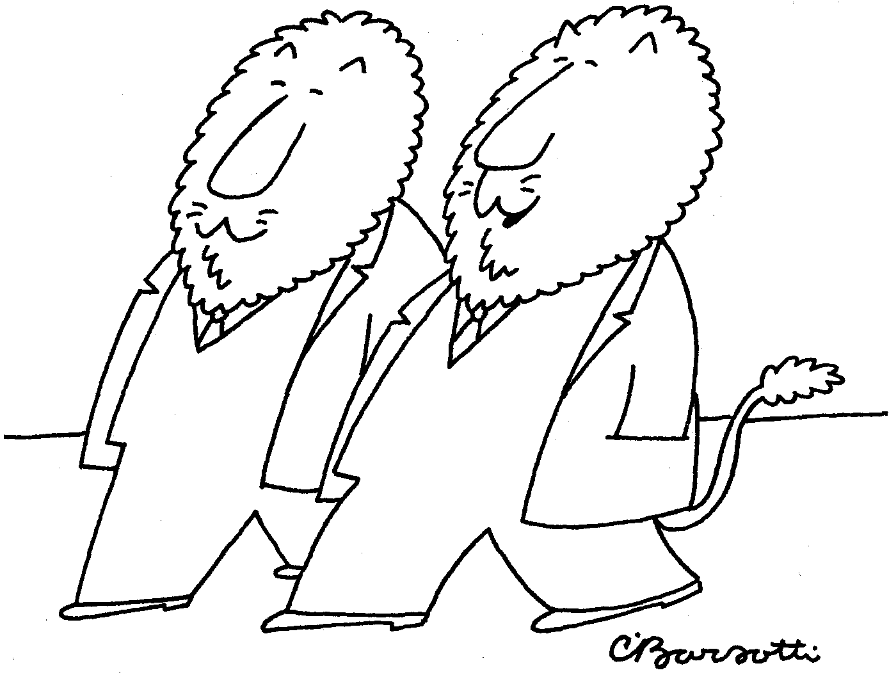
what people like Rob Reiner and Hillary Clinton are saying to what neuroscientists have actually concluded. The result is a superb book, clear and engaging, that serves as both popular science and intellectual history.

Mrs. Clinton and her allies, Bruer writes, are correct in their premise: the brain at birth *is* a work in progress. Relatively few connections among its billions of cells have yet been established. In the first few years of life, the brain begins to wire itself up at a furious pace, forming hundreds of thousands, even millions, of new synapses every second. Infants produce so many new neural connections, so quickly, that the brain of a two-year-old is actually far more dense with neural connections than the brain of an adult. After three, that burst of activity seems to slow down, and our brain begins the long task of rationalizing its communications network, finding those connections which seem to be the most important and getting rid of the rest.

During this brief initial period of synaptical "exuberance," the brain is especially sensitive to its environment. David Hubel and Torsten Wiesel, in a famous experiment, sewed one of the eyes of a kitten shut for the first three months of its life, and when they opened it back up they found that the animal was permanently blind in that eye. There are critical periods early in life, then, when the brain will not develop properly unless it receives a certain amount of outside stimulation. In another series of experiments, begun in the early seventies, William Greenough, a psychologist at the University of Illinois, showed that a rat reared in a large, toy-filled cage with other rats ended up with a substantially more developed visual cortex than a rat that spent its first month alone in a small, barren cage: the brain, to use the word favored by neuroscientists, is *plastic*—that is, modifiable by experience. In other words, Hillary Clinton's violent citizens and unfocussed workers might seem to be the human equivalents of kittens who've had an eye sewed shut,



Infancy is an experimental research program, the authors of "The Scientist in the Crib" argue, and the parents are the lab rats.



"Right. How could anyone look at a rotting zebra corpse and not believe there's a God?"

• •

or rats who've been reared in a barren cage. If in the critical first three years of synapse formation we could give people the equivalent of a big cage full of toys, she was saying, we could make them healthier and smarter.

Put this way, these ideas sound quite reasonable, and it's easy to see why they have attracted such excitement. But Bruer's contribution is to show how, on several critical points, this account of child development exaggerates or misinterprets the available evidence.

Consider, he says, the matter of synapse formation. The zero-to-three activists are convinced that the number of synapses we form in our earliest years plays a big role in determining our mental capacity. But do we know that to be true? People with a form of mental retardation known as fragile-X syndrome, Bruer notes, have higher numbers of synapses in their brain than the rest of us. More important, the period in which humans gain real intellectual maturity is late adolescence, by which time the brain is aggressively *pruning* the number of connections. Is intelligence associated with how many synapses you have or with how efficiently you manage to sort out and make sense of those connections later in life? Nor do we know how dependent the initial burst of synapse formation is on environmental stimulation. Bruer writes of an experiment where the right hand of a monkey was restrained in a leather mitten from birth to four months, effectively limiting all sensory stimulation. That's the same period when young monkeys form enormous numbers of connections in the somatosensory cortex, the area of the monkey brain responsible for size and texture discriminations, so you'd think that the restrained hand would be impaired. But it wasn't: within a short time, it was functioning normally, which suggests that there is a lot more flexibility and resilience in some aspects of brain development than we might have imagined.

Bruer also takes up the question of early childhood as a developmental window. It makes sense that if children don't hear language by the age of eleven or twelve they aren't going to speak, and that children who are seriously neglected throughout their upbringing will suffer permanent emotional injury. But why, Bruer asks, did advocates arrive at three years of age as a cutoff point? Different parts of the brain develop at different speeds. The rate of synapse formation in our visual cortex peaks at around three or four months. The synapses in our prefrontal cortex—the parts of our brain involved in the most sophisticated cognitive tasks—peak perhaps as late as three years, and aren't pruned back until middle-to-late adolescence. How can the same cutoff apply to both regions?

Greenough's rat experiments are used to support the critical-window idea, because he showed that he could affect brain development in those early years by altering the environment of his animals. The implications of the experiment aren't so straightforward, though. The experiments began when the rats were about three weeks old, which is already past rat "infancy," and continued until they were fifty-five days old, which put them past puberty. So the experiment showed the neurological consequences of deprivation not during some critical window of infancy but during the creature's entire period of maturation. In fact, when Greenough repeated his experiment with rats that were four hundred and fifty days old—well past middle age—he found that those kept in complex environments once again had significantly denser neural connections than those kept in isolation.

Even the meaning of the kitten with its eye sewn shut turns out to be far from obvious. When that work was repeated on monkeys, researchers found that if they deprived *both* eyes of early stimulation—rearing a monkey in darkness for its first six months—the animal could see (although not perfectly), and the binocularity of its vision, the ability of its left and right eyes to coördinate images, was normal. The experiment doesn't show that more stimulation is better than less for binocular vision. It just suggests that whatever stimulation there is should be balanced, which is why closing one eye tilts the developmental process in favor of the open eye.

To say that the brain is plastic, then, is not to say that the brain is dependent on certain narrow windows of stimulation. Neuroscientists say instead that infant brains have "experience-expectant plasticity"—which means that they need only something that approximates a normal environment. Bruer writes:

> The odds that our children will end up with appropriately fine-tuned brains are incredibly favorable, because the stimuli the brain *expects* during critical periods are the

kinds of stimuli that occur everywhere and all the time within the normal developmental environment for our species. It is only when there are severe genetic or environmental aberrations from the normal that nature's expectations are frustrated and neural development goes awry.

In the case of monkeys, the only way to destroy their binocular vision is to sew one eye shut for six months—an entirely contrived act that would almost never happen in the wild. Greenough points out that the "complex" environment he created for his rats—a large cage full of toys and other animals—is actually the closest equivalent of the environment that a rat would encounter naturally. When he created a super-enriched environment for his rats, one with even more stimulation than they would normally encounter, the rats weren't any better off. The only way he could affect the neurological development of the animals was to put them in a barren cage by themselves—again, a situation that an animal would never encounter in the wild. Bruer quotes Steve Petersen, a neuroscientist at Washington University, in St. Louis, as saying that neurological development so badly *wants* to happen that his only advice to parents would be "Don't raise your children in a closet, starve them, or hit them in the head with a frying pan." Petersen was, of course, being flip. But the general conclusion of researchers seems to be that we human beings enjoy a fairly significant margin of error in our first few years of life. Studies done of Romanian orphans who spent their first year under conditions of severe deprivation suggest that most (but not all) can recover if adopted into a nurturing home. In another study, psychologists examined children from an overcrowded orphanage who had been badly neglected as infants and subsequently adopted into loving homes. Within two years of their adoption, one psychologist involved in their rehabilitation had concluded:

> We had not anticipated the older children who had suffered deprivations for periods of 2 1/2 to 4 years to show swift response to treatment. That they did so amazed us. These inarticulate, underdeveloped youngsters who had formed no relationships in their lives, who were aimless and without a capacity to concentrate on anything, had resembled a pack of animals more than a group of human beings. . . . As we worked with the children, it became apparent that their inadequacy was not the

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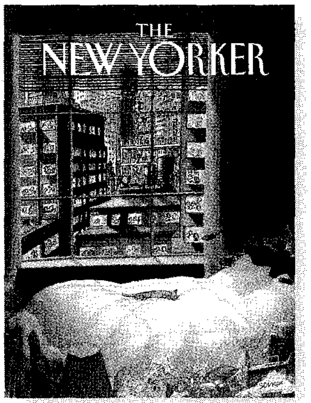

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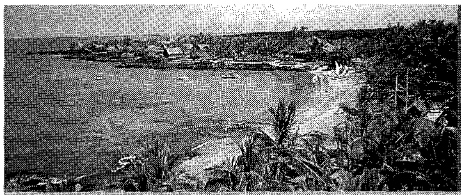

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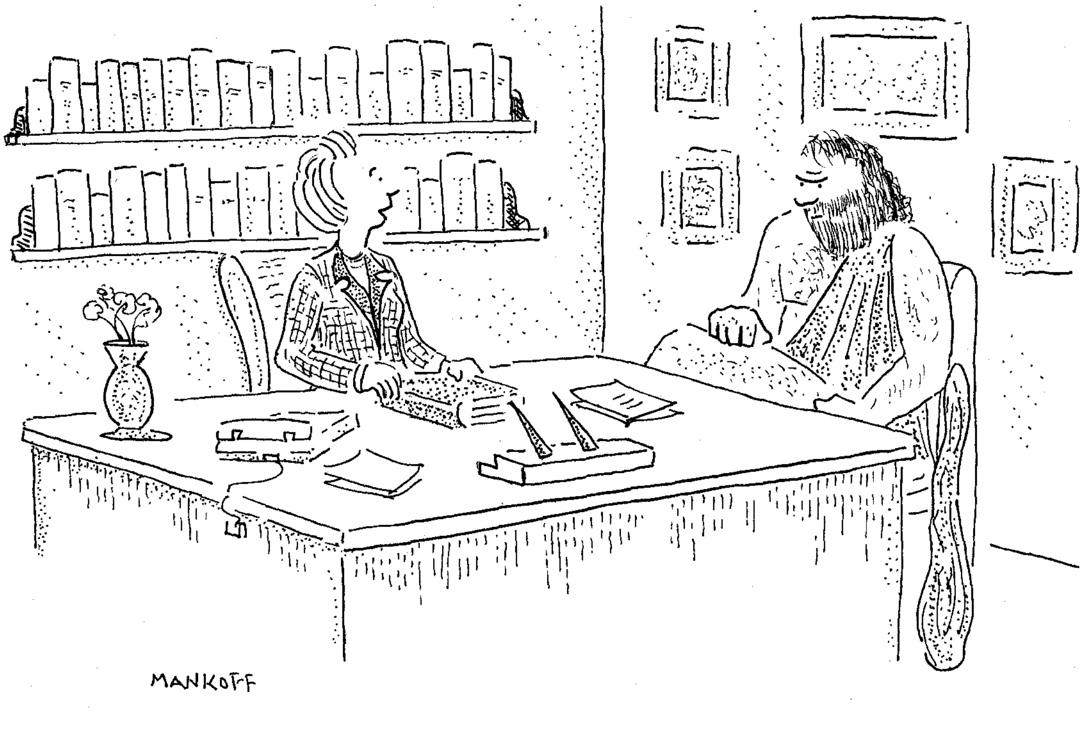
result of damage but, rather, was due to a dearth of normal experiences without which development of human qualities is impossible. After a year of treatment, many of these older children were showing a trusting dependency toward the staff of volunteers and . . . self-reliance in play and routines.

SOME years ago, the Berkeley psychology professor Alison Gopnik and one of her students, Betty Repacholi, conducted an experiment with a series of fourteen-month-old toddlers. Repacholi showed the babies two bowls of food, one filled with Goldfish crackers and one filled with raw broccoli. All the babies, naturally, preferred the crackers. Repacholi then tasted the two foods, saying "Yuck" and making a disgusted face at one and saying "Yum" and making a delighted face at the other. Then she pushed both bowls toward the babies, stretched out her hand, and said, "Could you give me some?"

When she liked the crackers, the babies gave her crackers. No surprise there. But when Repacholi liked the broccoli and hated the crackers, the babies were presented with a difficult philosophical issue—that different people may have different, even conflicting, desires. The fourteen-month-olds couldn't grasp that. They thought that if they liked crackers everyone liked crackers, and so they gave Repacholi the crackers, despite her expressed preferences. Four months later, the babies had, by and large, figured this principle out, and when Repacholi made a face at the crackers they knew enough to give her the broccoli. "The Scientist in the Crib" (Morrow; $24), a fascinating new book that Gopnik has written with Patricia Kuhl and Andrew Meltzoff, both at the University of Washington, argues that the discovery of this principle—that different people have different desires—is the source of the so-called terrible twos. "What makes the terrible twos so terrible is not that the babies do things you don't want them to do—one-year-olds are plenty good at that—but that they do things *because* you don't want them to," the authors write. And why is that? Not, as is commonly thought, because toddlers want to test parental authority, or because they're just contrary. Instead, the book argues, the terrible twos represent a rational and engaged exploration of what is to two-year-olds a brand-new idea—a generalization of the insight that the fact that they hate broccoli and like crackers doesn't mean that everyone hates broccoli and likes crackers. "Toddlers are systematically testing the dimensions on which their desires and the desires of others may be in conflict," the authors write. Infancy is an experimental research program, in which "the child is the budding psychologist; we parents are the laboratory rats."

These ideas about child development are, when you think about it, oddly complementary to the neurological arguments of John Bruer. The paradox of the zero-to-three movement is that, for all its emphasis on how alive children's brains are during their early years, it views babies as profoundly passive—as hostage to the quality of the experiences provided for them by their parents and caregivers. "The Scientist in the Crib" shows us something quite different. Children are scientists, who develop theories and interpret evidence from the world around them in accordance with those theories. And when evidence starts to mount suggesting that the existing theory isn't correct—wait a minute, just because I like crackers doesn't mean Mommy likes crackers—they create a new theory to explain the world, just as a physicist would if confronted with new evidence on the relation of energy and matter. Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl play with this idea at some length. Science, they suggest, is actually a kind of institutionalized childhood, an attempt to harness abilities that evolved to be used by babies or young children. Ultimately, the argument suggests that child development is a rational process directed and propelled by the child himself. How does the child learn about different desires? By systematically and repeatedly provoking a response from adults. In the broccoli experiment, the adult provided the fourteen-month-old with the information ("I hate Goldfish crackers") necessary to make the right decision. But the child ignored that information until he himself had developed a theory to interpret it. When "The Scientist in the Crib" describes children as budding psychologists and adults as laboratory rats, it's more than a clever turn of phrase. Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl observe that our influence on infants "seems to work in concert with



"We feel that your female characters are somewhat undeveloped."

children's own learning abilities." Newborns will "imitate facial expressions" but not "complex actions they don't understand themselves." And the authors conclude, "Children won't take in what you tell them until it makes sense to them. Other people don't simply shape what children do; parents aren't the programmers. Instead, they seem designed to provide just the right sort of information."

It isn't until you read "The Scientist in the Crib" alongside more conventional child-development books that you begin to appreciate the full implications of its argument. Here, for example, is a passage from "What's Going On in There? How the Brain and Mind Develop in the First Five Years of Life," by Lise Eliot, who teaches at the University of Chicago: "It's important to avoid the kind of muddled baby-talk that turns a sentence like 'Is she the cutest little baby in the world?' into 'Uz see da cooest wiwo baby inna wowud?' Caregivers should try to enunciate clearly when speaking to babies and young children, giving them the cleanest, simplest model of speech possible." Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl see things a little differently. First, they point out, by six or seven months babies are already highly adept at decoding the sounds they hear around them, using the same skills we do when we talk to someone with a thick foreign accent or a bad cold. If you say "Uz see da cooest wiwo baby inna wowud?" they hear something like "Is she the cutest little baby in the world?" Perhaps more important, this sort of Motherese—with its elongated vowels and repetitions and overpronounced syllables—is just the thing for babies to develop their language skills. And Motherese, the authors point out, seems to be innate. It's found in every culture in the world, and anyone who speaks to a baby uses it, automatically, even without realizing it. Babies want Motherese, so they manage to elicit it from the rest of us. That's a long way from the passive baby who thrives only because of the specialized, high-end parenting skills of the caregiver. "One thing that science tells us is that nature has designed us to teach babies, as much as it has designed babies to learn," Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl write. "Almost all of the adult actions we've described"—actions that are critical for the cognitive development of babies—"are swift, spontaneous, automatic and unpremeditated."

Does it matter that Mrs. Clinton and her allies have misread the evidence on child development? In one sense, it doesn't. The First Lady does not claim to be a neuroscientist. She is a politician, and she is interested in the brains of children only to further an entirely worthy agenda: improved day care, pediatric care, and early-childhood education. Sooner or later, however, bad justifications for social policy can start to make for bad social policy, and that is the real danger of the zero-to-three movement.

In Lise Eliot's book, for instance, there's a short passage in which she writes of the extraordinary powers of imitation that infants possess. A fifteen-month-old who watches an experimenter lean over and touch his forehead to the top of a box will, when presented with that same box four months later, do exactly the same thing. "The fact that these memories last so long is truly remarkable—and a little bit frightening," Eliot writes, and she continues:

> It goes a long way toward explaining why children, even decades later, are so prone to replicating their parents' behavior. If toddlers can repeat, even several months later, actions they've seen only once or twice, just imagine how watching their parents' daily activities must affect them. Everything they see and hear over time—work, play, fighting, smoking, drinking, reading, hitting, laughing, words, phrases, and gestures—is stored in ways that shape their later actions, and the more they see of a particular behavior, the likelier it is to reappear in their own conduct.

There is something to this. Why we act the way we do is obviously the result of all kinds of influences and experiences, including those cues we pick up unconsciously as babies. But this doesn't mean, as Eliot seems to think it does, that you can draw a straight line between a concrete adult behavior and what little Suzie, at six months, saw her mother do. As far as we can tell, for instance, infant imitation has nothing to do with smoking. As the behavioral geneticist David Rowe has demonstrated, the children of smokers are more likely than others to take up the habit because of genetics: they have inherited the same genes that made their parents like, and be easily addicted to, nicotine. Once you account for heredity, there is little evidence that parental smoking habits in-

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THE HOUSEGUEST, by Agnes Rossi (Dutton; $23.95). In 1934, Edward Devlin moves from Ireland to Paterson, New Jersey, in the hope of finding a new life: money, love, and the ability to forget all that came before, which included fighting for the I.R.A. and losing his wife to tuberculosis. He soon meets up with an old but distant friend, John Fitzgibbon, a wealthy entrepreneur, and his much younger wife, Sylvia. Fitzgibbon is a version of Jay Gatsby—his coiffure, white shirts, and gold cufflinks lend him a compelling veneer of greatness—but Edward is far more aggressive than Nick Carraway. His seduction of Sylvia (and its effect on Fitzgibbon) is its own artfully told and patently American story.

SICK PUPPY, by Carl Hiaasen (Knopf; $25). A twenty-six-year-old self-styled ecoterrorist spots a man tossing trash from his car window onto a Florida highway and begins stalking him. The litterbug turns out to be a fat-cat lobbyist and political fixer, and his gonzo comeuppance sends him bouncing like a pinball among a handful of cartoonishly venal politicians, shoreline developers, animal smugglers, and hit men. Hiaasen's over-the-top plotting and dark hilarity, however, are always in the service of a passionate sense of outrage at Florida's culture of excess, and at the willingness of his fellow-natives to sell out their home state.

JOSEPH MCCARTHY: REËXAMINING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF AMERICA'S MOST HATED SENATOR, by Arthur Herman (Free Press; $26). In this revisionist history, a right-wing academic attempts to make us think better of Joe McCarthy. He fails for several reasons, among them his admission that McCarthy "preferred to exaggerate—even lie" when he launched his accusations. In addition, despite the book's apparatus of scholarship, Herman uncritically takes part in the vendetta against the New Deal. He neglects to acknowledge, for example, that liberal Democrats were doubtful about accusations of Communism because his conservative heroes had been calling both the Democrats and such measures as Social Security "Communist" since the nineteen-thirties. The author's justification for McCarthy's crusade is the reality of Communist espionage. This, unfortunately, has continued in spite of McCarthy's labors, which succeeded only in tainting anti-Communism.

SIDEWALK, by Mitchell Duneier, with photographs by Ovie Carter (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $27). Since 1992, Duneier, a sociologist, has been a participant-observer in the lives of a group of street venders—mostly poor, black, and male—operating in the center of Greenwich Village. He anatomizes an extensive unofficial economy that comprises whole strata of panhandlers and scavengers in addition to the men who are actually vending. Always sympathetic to their struggles in a society whose reactions typically range from disapproval to fear, Duneier nonetheless avoids "sociological romance" and doesn't fight shy of issues like criminality and drug abuse.

A WEAKNESS FOR ALMOST EVERYTHING: NOTES ON LIFE, GASTRONOMY, AND TRAVEL, by Aldo Buzzi, translated from the Italian by Ann Goldstein (Steerforth; $9.50). When Buzzi is caught watching his dinner cook through the oven door, he explains that he has a weakness for scallops, whereupon his host retorts, "You have a weakness for almost everything." These elegant yet informal essays—a sequel of sorts to Buzzi's 1996 collection, "Journey to the Land of the Flies"—confirm this observation as the author's curiosity leads him from the Roman Empire to Sputnik and back again. But whether he is apologizing to a pair of favorite shoes that he must consign to the garbage or musing on the exact location of paradise, thoughts of the kitchen are never far away. A bird-filled garden is described as a restaurant for a cat, and a fresco of San Lorenzo in the Italian countryside prompts a cooking tip: "Without meaning to, the saint demonstrates the best way to use the grill."

A LIFE ON THE STAGE, by Jacob Adler, translated from the Yiddish by Lulla Rosenfeld (Knopf; $30). When Adler, the "Great Eagle" of the Yiddish stage, died, in New York in 1926, between fifty and a hundred thousand people gathered on the Lower East Side to mourn him. His memoirs, first published in the Yiddish newspaper *Die Varheit* more than eighty years ago, constitute the pilgrim's progress of a rough Odessan youth whose monumental presence on the stage—in roles ranging from Uriel Acosta to the Yiddish King Lear—made him a star. Adler's career also spanned the birth, growth, and maturity of the Yiddish theatre, a development that he was largely responsible for. In the prologue to his memoirs, he writes, "My life has been no walking shadow, no brief moment. When I measure it with the measure of my feelings, it has been an eternity, an ocean."

THE FLASHBOAT: POEMS COLLECTED AND RECLAIMED, by Jane Cooper (Norton; $23.95). "Reclaiming" a number of formerly uncollected poems, this retrospective traces Cooper's impressively varied career from the late forties to the mid-nineties. Quietly lyrical and pointedly political by turns, Cooper eventually replaced the flinty formalism of her postwar lyrics with lines cast "in the natural speech of the breakfast table." Whether surveying the oils of O'Keeffe, the novels of Cather, or the plight of King Kong, Cooper handles with equal assurance public statement and private reflection, each marked by what she values as "the sanity of observed detail."

fluence children; the adopted children of smokers, for instance, are no more likely to smoke than the children of non-smokers. To the extent that social imitation is a factor in smoking, the psychologist Judith Rich Harris has observed, it is imitation that occurs in *adolescence* between a teen-ager and his or her peers. So if you were to use Eliot's ideas to design an anti-smoking campaign you'd direct your efforts to stop parents from smoking around their children, and miss the social roots of smoking entirely.

This point—the distance between infant experience and grownup behavior—is made even more powerfully in Jerome Kagan's marvellous new book, "Three Seductive Ideas" (Oxford; $27.50). Kagan, a professor of psychology at Harvard, offers a devastating critique of what he calls "infant determinism," arguing that many of the truly critical moments of socialization—the moments that social policy properly concerns itself with—occur well after the age of three. As Kagan puts it, a person's level of "anxiety, depression, apathy and anger" is linked to his or her "symbolic constructions of experience"—how the bare facts of any experience are combined with the context of that event, attitudes toward those involved, expectations and memories of past experience. "The Palestinian youths who throw stones at Israeli soldiers believe that the Israeli government has oppressed them unjustly," Kagan writes. He goes on:

> The causes of their violent actions are not traceable to the parental treatment they received in their first few years. Similarly, no happy African-American two-year-old knows about the pockets of racism in American society or the history of oppression blacks have suffered. The realization that there is prejudice will not take form until that child is five or six years old.

Infant determinism doesn't just encourage the wrong kind of policy. Ultimately, it undermines the basis of social policy. Why bother spending money trying to help older children or adults if the patterns of a lifetime are already, irremediably, in place? Inevitably, some people will interpret the zero-to-three dogma to mean that our obligations to the disadvantaged expire by the time they reach the age of three. Kagan writes of a famous Hawaiian study of child development, in which almost seven hundred children, from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds, were followed from birth to adulthood. The best predictor of who would develop serious academic or behavioral problems in adolescence, he writes, was social class: more than eighty per cent of the children who got in trouble came from the poorest segment of the sample. This is the harsh reality of child development, from which the zero-to-three movement offers a convenient escape. Kagan writes, "It is considerably more expensive to improve the quality of housing, education and health of the approximately one million children living in poverty in America today than to urge their mothers to kiss, talk to, and play with them more consistently." In his view, "to suggest to poor parents that playing with and talking to their infant will protect the child from future academic failure and guarantee life success" is an act of dishonesty. But that does not go far enough. It is also an unwitting act of reproach: it implies to disadvantaged parents that if their children do not turn out the way children of privilege do it is their fault—that they are likely to blame for the flawed wiring of their children's brains.

In 1973, when Hillary Clinton—then, of course, known as Hillary Rodham—was a young woman just out of law school, she wrote an essay for the *Harvard Educational Review* entitled "Children Under the Law." The courts, she wrote, ought to reverse their longstanding presumption that children are legally incompetent. She urged, instead, that children's interests be considered independently from those of their parents. Children ought to be deemed capable of making their own decisions and voicing their own interests, unless evidence could be found to the contrary. To her, the presumption of incompetence gave the courts too much discretion in deciding what was in the child's best interests, and that discretion was most often abused in cases of children from poor minority families. "Children of these families," she wrote, "are perceived as bearers of the sins and disabilities of their fathers."

This is a liberal argument, because a central tenet of liberalism is that social mobility requires a release not merely from burdens imposed by poverty but also from those imposed by family—that absent or indifferent or incompetent parents should not be permitted to destroy a child's prospects. What else was the classic Horatio Alger story about? In "Ragged Dick," the most famous of Alger's novels, Dick's father runs off before his son's birth, and his mother dies destitute while Dick is still a baby. He becomes a street urchin, before rising to the middle class through a combination of hard work, honesty, and luck. What made such tales so powerful was, in part, the hopeful notion that the circumstances of your birth need not be your destiny; and the modern liberal state has been an attempt to make good on that promise.

But Mrs. Clinton is now promoting a movement with a different message—that who you are and what you are capable of could be the result of how successful your mother and father were in rearing you. In her book "It Takes a Village," she criticizes the harsh genetic determinism of "The Bell Curve." But an ideology that holds that your future is largely decided at birth by your parents' genes is no more dispiriting than one that holds that your future might be decided at three by your parents' behavior. The unintended consequence of the zero-to-three movement is that, once again, it makes disadvantaged children the bearers of the sins and disabilities of their parents.

The truth is that the traditional aims of the liberal agenda find ample support in the arguments of John Bruer, of Jerome Kagan, of Judith Rich Harris, and of Gopnik, Meltzoff, and Kuhl. All of them offer considerable evidence that what the middle class perceives as inadequate parenting need not condemn a baby for life, and that institutions and interventions to help children as they approach maturity can make a big difference in how they turn out. It is, surely, a sad irony that, at the very moment when science has provided the intellectual reinforcement for modern liberalism, liberals themselves are giving up the fight. ♦

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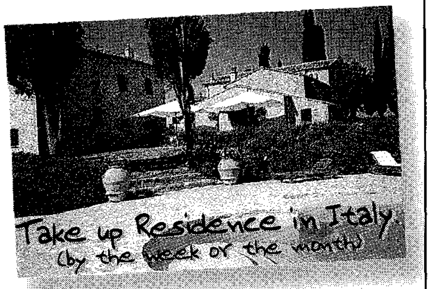

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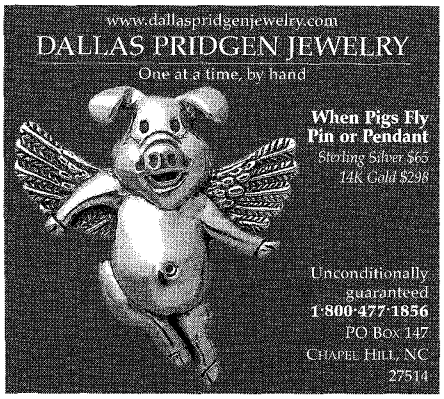
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MUSICAL EVENTS

GATSBYESQUE

Making an opera of Fitzgerald's masterpiece.

BY ALEX ROSS

In the twentieth century, the Met has presented world premières of twenty American operas. None of them, with the possible exception of Samuel Barber's "Vanessa," has found a place in the repertory. Playing now at the Met is another attempt at what must seem a cursed genre—American opera on a grand scale. The composer is John Harbison; the subject is "The Great Gatsby." It would be a pleasure to report that, as the century expired, the Met finally found a major new work worthy of its gigantic stage. John Harbison is an excellent craftsman, a master of many genres, and he has been yearning to write a "Gatsby" opera for much of his life. And there were moments when he seemed to have that tantalizing goal—the great American opera—within his grasp. That he let it slip away makes one wonder whether any living composer is up to the task.

The Met's history with Americana is strange and sad. Early in the century, premières were offered seemingly on a first-come basis: such names as John Laurence Seymour, John Adam Hugo, Charles Wakefield Cadman, and Reginald De Koven are now shrouded in an aura of dull mystery. In the middle of the century, when the Met could have turned to genius populists like Copland and Bernstein, it lost interest in new opera. In the last decade, things have picked up. John Corigliano's "The Ghosts of Versailles" appeared in 1991; Philip Glass's "The Voyage" followed in 1992; and new operas by Tobias Picker and Tan Dun are slated for the next few years. The Met's commissioning process has become more sane—and perhaps too cautious. The company does not seem prepared to take a chance on a younger composer, or on one who might stir up some stylistic or political controversy. If the Met wants to banish once and for all the pale ghost of J. L. Seymour, it might have to put its trust in a composer who will try to shake the house at its foundation, rather than one who wishes to crown a distinguished career.

"Gatsby" is, in purely musical terms, a considerable achievement. Unlike Corigliano's "Ghosts," it speaks in its own individual and original language. In the annals of modern Met premières, only "Vanessa" rivals it for substance. Here, for once, is a new opera that cannot be summed up with a checklist of borrowed tunes. Harbison's personality is present right from the start: tonal chords grind against each other in dissonant formations; the music picks up steam in insistent, irregular rhythms; attenuated melodies rise and fade; a newly minted nineteen-twenties tune twirls in a vaguely surreal harmonic space. Harbison commands a very wide array of styles, all of them filtered through his own spiky, polytonal vocabulary. At one moment, he indulges in sighing Renaissance polyphony or chugging Bachian counterpoint. Then he writes an expert, hummable torch song or tango. At his best, he creates music of brittle brilliance and mobile complexity.

With a running time of over three hours, however, "Gatsby" outstays its welcome and becomes monotonous. The libretto is by the composer himself, and, although it ingeniously telescopes certain episodes from the novel, it should have left out still more. After a while, claustrophobia sets in. Those grinding chords of the overture keep returning—augmented C major and D-flat major, with one tone of each sticking like a thorn in the side of the other—and they create a humid, noxious atmosphere. There's a lot of tonality in the piece, but simple triads are few and far between: Harbison is for-

From left: Dwayne Croft, Susan Graham, Jerry Hadley, Dawn Upshaw, Mark Baker, Lorraine Hunt Lieberson.

MARC HOM

ever piling them up in bitonal clumps, so that the bright colors of common chords mix into shades of brown and gray. En masse, Harbison's orchestra makes a gritty, brassy sound. What does all this have to do with the sardonic suavity of F. Scott Fitzgerald? Only when Harbison writes in jazz idioms does he get the texture of the prose. Otherwise, he uses a language that would seem better suited to Brecht.

Most curious is the vocal writing, which doesn't seem to follow the flow of Fitzgerald's language, or, for that matter, the flow of anyone else's. It goes up where one would expect it to go down, and vice versa. At odd moments, it leaps across wide, awkward intervals, like the bad twelve-tone vocalizing of old. When Gatsby enters, he sings, over a descending octave, "I'm Gatsby," and the first note is sustained for nearly two bars. He comes across not as a charming charlatan but as a pompous fool. Nick Carraway responds with an overheated descending octave of his own. (For those who recently saw "Tristan" at the Met, the exchange is unfortunately reminiscent of the moment in Act II when Tristan and Isolde greet each other.) Harbison usually sets Gatsby's signature phrase, "old sport," as a falling fourth, with the first syllable drawn out in a way that it never is in conversational speech. The intent may be to expose Gatsby's pretensions, but the character becomes maladroit and nerdy—not unlike Al Gore when he's trying to sound Southern.

If the Met had a sexy, strong-voiced American tenor to give the title role spit and polish, "Gatsby" might have more impact. But Jerry Hadley sounded strained on opening night, his voice drying out in the big aria that precedes his demise. Stuffed into a pink suit, he did not resemble a man who, as people speculate in the book, "killed a man once." He looked nothing like Robert Redford's Gatsby and a lot like Robert De Niro's Rupert Pupkin. Dwayne Croft was so much more assured and resonant in the baritone role of Nick that I wondered whether Gatsby's part should have been transposed down and assigned to him instead. Dawn Upshaw, kicking a leg backward in swing style, was a bright-voiced delight as Daisy Buchanan. Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, the consummate Baroque diva, made a belated Met début as Myrtle Wilson, and she seems to have a knack for the blues. Mark Baker shouted a lot as Tom Buchanan, not to the detriment of the character, who is always shouting about something. Susan Graham, as Jordan Baker, mingled her creamy mezzo with Upshaw's soprano to create some of the evening's musical high points. James Levine conducted vigorously.

What's best about this "Gatsby" is its ensembles, its crowd scenes, its costumes, its look. Michael Yeargan's sets, Duane Schuler's lighting, and Jane Greenwood's costumes mix soft twilight tones and bold flapper styles. In the party scenes at Gatsby's mansion, Chinese lanterns glimmer in front of a full moon and the famous "green light" across the bay. Robert La Fosse, the choreographer, stages some neat two-step dancing. Mark Lamos, the director, periodically shifts the whole cast into dreamlike slow motion. When the onstage band starts up one of Harbison's ersatz jazz numbers—with wittily rhyming lyrics by Murray Horwitz—Fitzgerald's whole decadent West Egg world comes to life. Then Hadley starts singing his needling octaves, and the spell is broken.

WHAT contemporary opera could fill the Met's cavernous spaces? Olivier Messiaen's "St. François d'Assise," for one. It is the last will and testament of the French master, who died in 1992, and it is just beginning to make its way in the world. A new recording on Deutsche Grammophon—part of the label's increasingly indispensable "20/21" series—makes the strongest possible argument for a piece that some critics greeted as a ponderous theological exercise at the time of its première, in 1983. A previous recording, under the direction of Seiji Ozawa, gave only a hazy impression of Messiaen's score, but this one, under Kent Nagano, is crystalline. "St. François" is, indeed, a collection of tableaux from the saint's life, but its music comes at the listener at such a pitch of intensity that the minutiae of visions become the stuff of drama. José van Dam's performance of the title role marks the summit of a magnificent career. Nagano conducts the Hallé Orchestra in a ferocious live performance from the Salzburg Festival. This is an essentially perfect document of what may be the greatest religious opera ever written. ♦

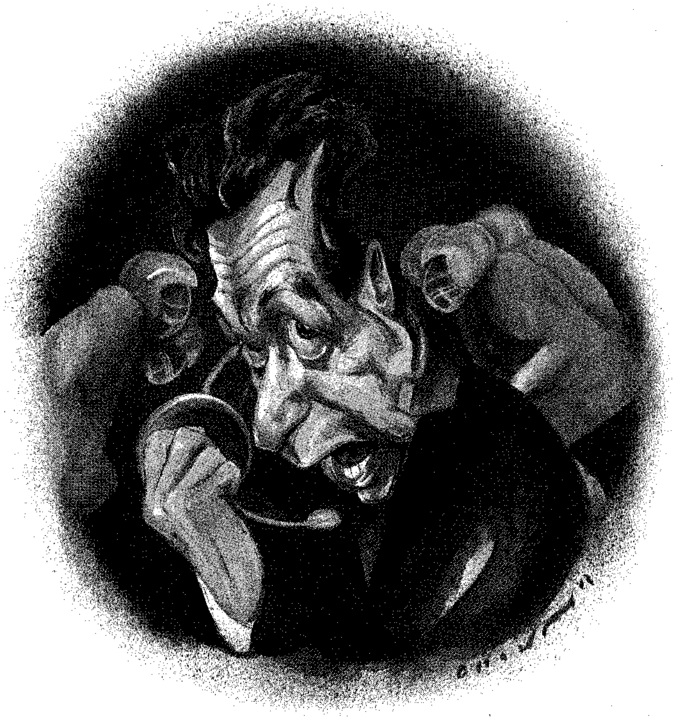
THE CURRENT CINEMA

ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Two studies in American cojones.

BY DAVID DENBY

EVERYTHING happens at once in Oliver Stone's pro-football movie, "Any Given Sunday." The ball is snapped, thighs churn, bodies lock together, and, as the coach screams and points, an arm is raised to throw a pass. Most of the time, Stone takes us deep inside the action, so deep that we may feel we're being threshed by the blades and teeth of a machine. The football scenes are brutally fragmented, and we can't see the design of any given play—it's the slam and clash that matter to Stone, the Homeric melee, which gets pulled to pieces and then combined like the flailing limbs of a music video. "Any Given Sunday" has been made with enormous skill. The soundtrack, for instance, is a kind of technological miracle—a spiked underbrush of crowd noises, yelled instructions, random curses. But this is an overdynamized and exhausting movie. Stone, God bless him, wants to have three orgasms at once. He wants *us* to have them, too; but, however pleasant a goal in life, this bonanza may not be the best thing for art.



Dramatic cantata: Pacino as the veteran coach of Stone's team.

STEVE BRODNER

In order to get a script for "Any Given Sunday," Stone merged a variety of different football projects that were lying around Hollywood, each with its attendant screenplays and revisions. The result is a compendium of thundering clichés. There is the haggard veteran coach of the Miami Sharks, Tony D'Amato (Al Pacino), who has sacrificed his life to the game; the blond-bitch, money-mad owner (Cameron Diaz), a retread from the baseball movie "Major League"; the aging star quarterback (Dennis Quaid), a popular hero who plays hurt, just as Nick Nolte did in "North Dallas Forty"; and a young hotshot, the black quarterback Willie Beamen (Jamie Foxx), a brilliant but arrogant athlete who changes the plays in the huddle and gets other players injured. Like dozens of young movie heroes before him, from Tyrone Power to Richard Gere, Willie is out for himself; he has to be humbled by his teammates and then educated into virtue by the old coach in order to become the great player that his talents have fated him to be.

Stone speaks through a bullhorn, but at least his instincts as an entertainer have revived. All the characters in the movie are caught at an extreme of desire: we know immediately what they want, and we know that they want it all the time. Stone measures vitality by the strength of aggression, and virtually every scene is a confrontation of one sort or another. The ritual combat on the field continues off the field, for life is just football by other means, and everyone plays to win. The uniformed gladiators carry off the long-limbed girls as the spoils of victory; the executives carry off money and power. Like much of Stone's work, "Any Given Sunday" is obvious but forceful, sensational but utterly sincere. Professional football, as Stone portrays it, has become a corporate prison that traps serious men like Tony D'Amato, a traditionalist who feels that television has pulled the game out of shape, distorting values on the field, turning players into celebrities who risk maiming themselves for the bonuses that TV sales provide. This is one of Pacino's hoarse-voiced, grandstanding performances, and, of course, he's great at it, building a pre-game speech into a dramatic cantata. The irony of the movie is that "Any Given Sunday" is itself an example of corporate art. Stone no longer believes in the power of a single image, and, like any maker of commercials or music videos, he sends the images at us in cascades. What he puts onscreen has much more power than a commercial, but Stone is still addicted to a very hard sell.

"The Hurricane" is a square inspirational movie with one extraordinary sequence—a sequence so good that it makes this rather clumpy and untrustworthy exercise in righteousness worth the trouble. Written by Armyan Bernstein and Dan Gordon and directed by Norman Jewison, the film is the story of Rubin (Hurricane) Carter, the black boxer from New Jersey who spent years in prison on a false murder charge. Convicted at the height of his career, in 1967, when he had a shot at the middleweight championship, Carter (Denzel Washington) shows up in the state penitentiary in Trenton wearing a beautiful silver-gray suit—a real stunner, which he refuses to relinquish for prison stripes. "I will not wear the clothes of a guilty man," he tells the warden, who clamps him in solitary confinement for ninety days. Sitting on the floor in his magnificent duds, Carter seems to split in two. One part of him, eyes afire, is all wound up, punching and jabbering—he's very much the whirlwind we've seen at the beginning of the movie, the boxer who destroys his opponents in the early rounds of a fight. The other, still seated, is a frightened man struggling to prevent his consciousness from dissolving altogether. The two halves try to control each other, and the seated man gradually silences the punching jabberer—a literal-minded but effective way of suggesting the dissociation that threatens many prisoners in solitary confinement. His schizophrenia tamed, Carter makes his days in solitary the beginning of a great transformation. He learns to "do the time"—accept the years as a kind of necessary trial, a forge of self-transcendence. Gradually, he changes from a violent fighter to the lean, ascetic thinker, adorned with specs, bald head, and goatee, who becomes the seventies icon of the black man unjustly incarcerated.

To say that Denzel Washington gives his usual fine performance is perhaps to take for granted how very good he is in one movie after another. I have grown accustomed to his extraordinary concentration, his quickness, his stern, appraising gaze; I love the way he holds back from obvious emphasis and lowers his voice when he's most earnest and deadly. The trouble is, I've become *too* accustomed to these things. In such films as "Cry Freedom," "Glory," "Malcolm X," and "Crimson Tide," Washington has played a proud black man whom whites try to pull down, and he has gone through the process, again and again, of proving his dignity and sanity by renouncing violence and asserting his mind and will. This is a major theme, of course—the black male's self-creation—and one could make the case that many people, white and black, still need to hear about it. Unfortunately, Washington is in danger of being trapped by the noble and necessary myth that he has constructed, just as Sidney Poitier, another very gifted actor, was trapped by a comparable myth thirty years ago. Since Washington can be wickedly funny, I'd love to see him play a wider range of roles—a real sleaze, a song-and-

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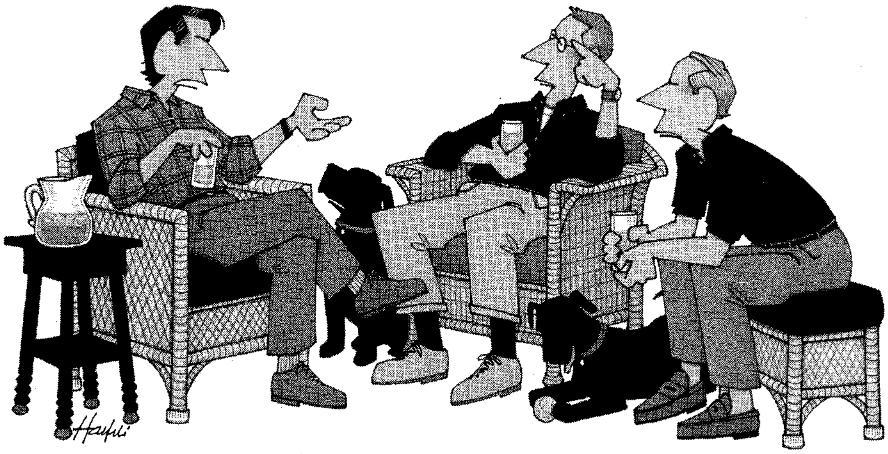

"There comes a point in a man's life when he just has to stop and say, 'O.K., I have hair on my back.'"

dance man, a Johnnie Cochran smartypants. In "The Hurricane," he has a burnished and beautiful intensity, but everything he does carries a solemn, didactic weight. At times, he seems to be playing Malcolm X all over again.

This may not be entirely an accident. Norman Jewison, who had earlier done successful work with black themes in such movies as "In the Heat of the Night" and "A Soldier's Story," was set to direct the Malcolm story, from a script by James Baldwin, when Spike Lee, in one of his lesser moments, race-carded Jewison off the table, bullying him out of the project and taking it on himself, in 1991. Whatever one thinks of Lee's actions, "The Hurricane" suggests that when Jewison has a story to tell, he doesn't quite know how to tell it. In the movie, the lawyers working on Carter's behalf have failed, and so three white Canadians (Liev Schreiber, John Hannah, and Deborah Kara Unger) and an American black teen-ager (Vicellous Reon Shannon) combine their efforts and gather the fresh evidence that leads to Carter's freedom. As accounts in the January 3rd *Nation* and a Jack Newfield column in the New York *Post* make clear, the Canadians didn't do half of what the movie suggests, and many other people played a role in Carter's liberation. But, even if one didn't know the actual facts, one might be dubious about "The Hurricane," which feels like a liberal fairy tale. What, for instance, are the romantic arrangements among the two Canadian men and the woman, Lisa Peters, who all live together? The filmmakers are coy about this, and fail to tell us that Peters and Rubin Carter later got married.

A story so filled with goodness might have worked onscreen if the characters were odd or funny in some way, or loaded with ambivalence and hostility that they overcame, but Carter's rescuers, in this telling, are merely good, and rather bland; Jewison, who was born in Toronto, doesn't seem to realize he's underlining all the jokes about the blandness of Canadians. "The Hurricane" feels false, evasive, and factually very thin. What other violent activities did Carter perform in New Jersey besides boxing? He may have been innocent of murder, but was he innocent of everything? I'm not convinced by this movie that he was. "The Hurricane" would have been a lot more interesting if the Devil that Carter conquered in prison had owned a larger part of his soul. But the movie is not really concerned with character and quickly evolves into a moralized racial melodrama. There are bad whites and good whites. The bad ones, such as the Javert-like police detective (Dan Hedaya), who looms out of the darkness to pursue the hero, are implacably racist; the good ones appreciate the genius of Rubin Carter. "The Hurricane" revels in the moral simplicities of the sixties. It's like something intended to be shown in school. But many of us have learned these lessons before, and perhaps we can now pray for a time when we no longer need to learn them again. ♦

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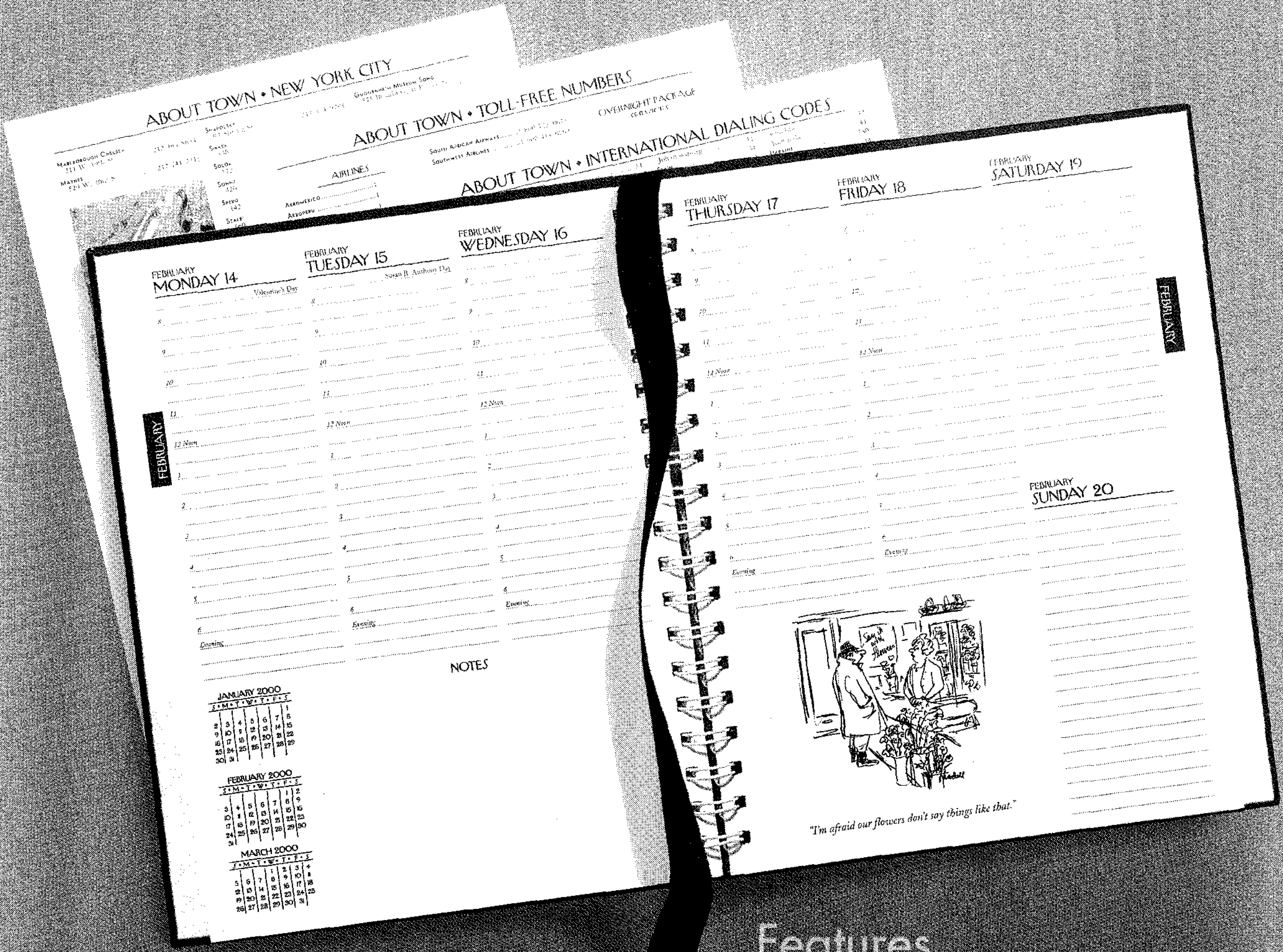
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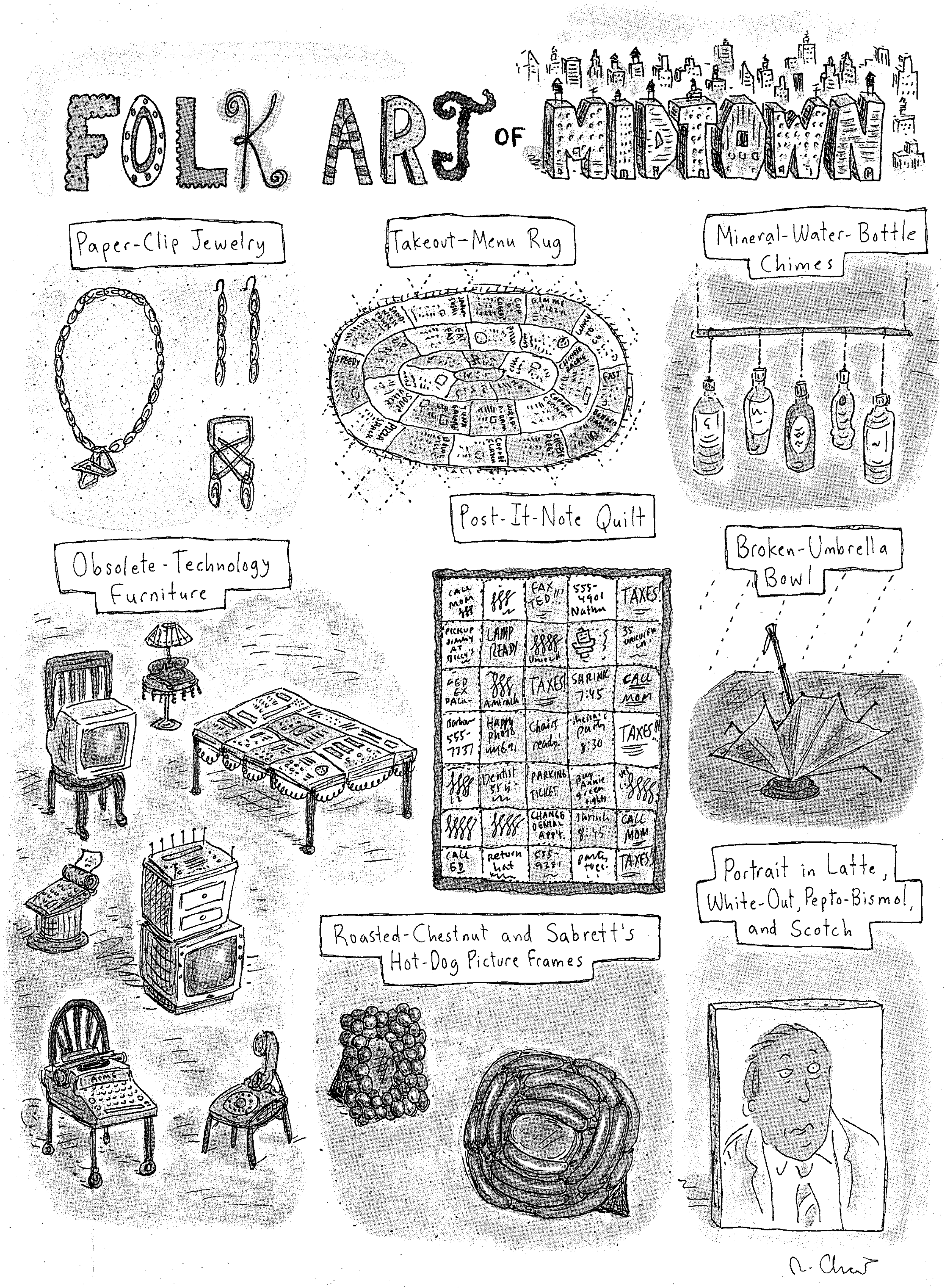
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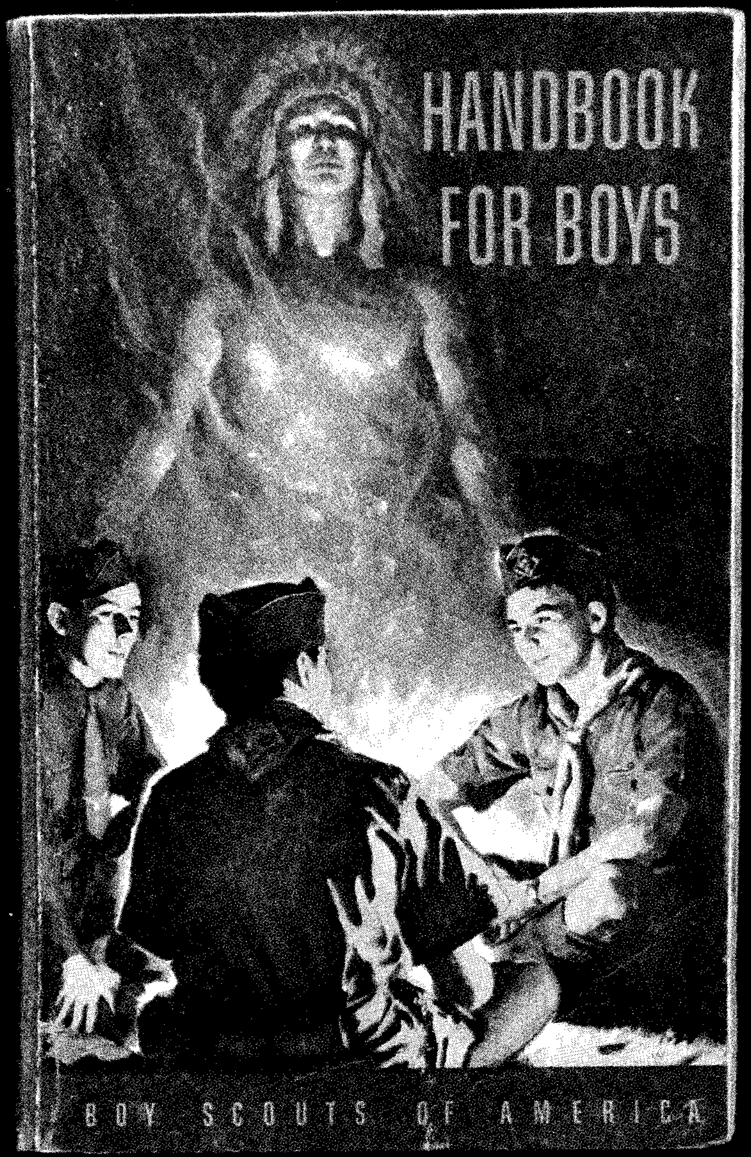
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